LIFESTYLE/C1
2bu!'s Christmas gift guide for the under 30

BUSINESS/B1
November inflation seen at 6.7-7.1%

ACROSS/A18
Enrile, Defensor face suit over Samar logging

WORLD/A12
US legislator pleads guilty to bribery

Apple iPod, Xbox 360 hottest electronic gifts for Christmas

PHILIPPINE DAILY
INQUIRER
BALANCED NEWS, FEARLESS VIEWS

Wednesday, November 30, 2005 • 24 pages / vol. 39 / no. 353

www.inq7.net

Garci left RP disguised as flight crew–Gonzalez

By Julee Ledesma Jacildone and Philip C. Tubeza

GOLD DUST
Miguel Molina shows he was to a gold medal finish in the 400-meter individual medley at the Tuca Aquatic Center in Los Baños, Laguna, Tuesday.

Peso up; economy slows

53-level against US dollar breached

By Doris C. Dumlao

OVERSEAS FILIPINO workers seeking better rates for their dollars before the peso further strengthens helped push the local currency yesterday to the 53 level, according to the treasurer or of a commercial bank.

It was the first time in nearly seven months since the country was rocked by illegal gambling and election-rigging scandal that the peso broke into the 53 level against the greenback.

The peso opened at 54.01 and surged to an intraday high of 53.91 in the afternoon before closing at 53.946, a gain of 20.5 centavos from Friday's finish of 54.15. The closing rate was the country's strongest finish since March 26.

Volume traded in the Philippine Dealing System amounted to $419.8 million.

(more on B4)

THE Philippines' Jenny Angeles (right) grabs a gold to seven bags against Thailand's Thanakorn Ted Kad in the 40-kg freestyle category.

RP bags 16 golds, pads medal lead

By Ray Learoz

ITS HOLIDAY AHEAD, FERGIEDa carried the weight for the Philippine campaign yesterday, highlighting a spirited gold medals that kept the Filipinos ahead in the 23rd Southeast Asian Games.

The 20-year-old Pereira threw the hammer a distance of 60.34 meters to shatter the 15-year-old SEA Games record of 58.4 meters set by Indon Dodong Sumiardi and remain the crown he won in Vietnam in 2003.

A meet-history graduate, the 5-foot-11 Pereira got valuable motivation tips from veteran hoopla and fellow Negrense Jerry Bryant on his cards and final throw. Pereira credited for the silver with a throw of 59.446 at the third Memorial Stadium.

Whether turned out to be the most productive for host Philippines with Willy Wang and the lads Yang Victy Ting and Lester Hernandez-Richard Ng outdoor topping their events.

Wang ruled the tenis-quiquin contest with a score of 9.35 to become the Philippines' second double gold medalist after diver Sheila Mae Bores. Earlier, Wang topped the tenis poomsae.

Showing classic and precision, Yang and Ting topped the tenis-duduo final event with weapons) for winner with 9.22 points while Pamintel and Ng ruled the men's side with 9.28 points at the Emilio Aguinaldo College gym.

(more on B7)

Jenny clinches gold for Spain, Page A27
More photos, photos in Sports, A23-30

Oil prices, politics cut growth to 4.1%

By Michelle P. Remo

HIGH OIL PRICES, the flagging global demand for electronics, a sluggish performance in agriculture and the political turmoil slowed the country's economic growth to 4.1 percent in the third quarter from 6.2 percent in the same period last year, officials said yesterday.

The economy is measured by the gross domestic product (GDP), the value of goods produced and services rendered, had grown 5.2 percent in the second quarter.

GDP growth for the three months to September was below private sector forecasts of 4.5 percent to 5.0 percent.

Socioeconomic Planning Secretary Augusto Santos said the

(more on B1)

House approves constituent assembly for Cha-cha

By Philip C. Tubeza

STEPPING ASIDE OPPOSITION objections, the House of Representatives last night passed a resolution calling for a constituent assembly to change the country's 18-year-old Charter.

The move, it similarly approved by the Senate, means that two chambers of Congress on a step away from forming themselves in to a single body to draft economic amendments to the Constitution in a parliamentary form of government for the country.

After four days of debates, the House approved by a vote with Concurrent Resolution 16 "convening Congress to propose amendments to, or revision of, the 1987 Constitution."

"The two-thirds House Concurrent Resolution No. 16 is hereby adopted," said House Speaker Jose de Venecia, presiding officer, to the applause of administration lawmakers at 9:20 p.m.

Cagayan de Oro Rep. Constantino Jaraula, chair of the House committee on constitutional amendments and the resolution's author, said the resolution would be sent to the Senate "as soon as possible" for its concurrence.

"I'm sure they will decide on it before Christmas, or at the latest, before the New Year," Jaraula said.

He said he expected both houses to eventually sit down together to propose amendments the actual work by the two chambers on the Charter would start only in March.

The resolution limited the

(more on A10)

US Marines deny raping woman at Subic Bay

By Tonette Orejas, Jeoffrey Joquiño and Allan Macatuno
PDI Central Luzon Desk

OLONGAPO CITY—FOR THE third time, five of the American Marines accused of raping a Filipina woman on Oct. 1 in Subic have denied the charge.

"No such crime occurred. As a matter of fact, at no point in time, do I have sex, forcibly or otherwise, with [the woman]," said Staff Sgt. Chad Brian Carpenter, 27, in his 12-page counter-affidavit filed yesterday by his lawyer Francisco Rodrigo Jr.

Corporal Corey Perez and Lance Corporals Dominic Duplantis, Keith Silkwood and Albert Lee also filed their affidavits yesterday through their lawyer Emmanuel Pelaz. John Cabacungan is now in custody, as per briefs.

John Cabacungan, the last marine to be denied raping the woman, All

(more on A14)

GEMMA DAMALERIO: God-fearing people.

NAPOLE: Verdict leaves an empty void.

Court finds cop guilty of journalist's murder

By Jaime B. Bulanbon
PDI Visayas Bureau

CEBU CITY—TABLE FEARS AFTER the killing, a former policeman was convicted yesterday of the murder of journalist Edgar Damalerio and sentenced to reclusion perpetua.

Judge Ramon Cardiña of the Cebu Regional Trial Court Branch 19 also ordered ex-PO1 Guillermo Pinpin to pay Damalerio's family P150,000 in moral, civil and exemplary damages.

The crowd in the packed courtroom cheered when the verdict was read. The widow, Mercia Gemma Damalerio, broke into tears and said the verdict was "a victory" not only for her family but also for "the people behind Bombo who are not afraid to die."

According to the Supreme Court Administrative Circular No. 4-92, reclusion perpetua entails imprisonment of at least 20 years, after which the convict becomes eligible for parole.

"I respect the decision of the

(more on A11)

A2 PHILIPPINE DAILY INQUIRER WEDNESDAY, NOVEMBER 19, 2003

WEATHER FORECAST

Second FRONTPAGE

5 troopers killed in clashes with NPA

By Evan Z. Pasadigan

THE MILITARY SUFFERED NEW SETBACKS IN the hands of the New People's Army, as two militiamen and three soldiers were killed in two encounters with communist rebels in Mindanao and northern Luzon during the weekend, military reports said.

The fresh casualties had been dispatched to check on the reported presence of NPA guerrillas in the area, according to the reports.

Militiamen killed, hurt

Two of the militiamen — members of the Mahusnod and Virgilio Gui to — were killed while two others, identified as Fernando Ani mad Orbo Salay, were wounded in the ambush.

At around 5:30 p.m. Sunday, members of the 17th Infantry Battalion encountered an undetermined number of communist guerrillas in the boundary of Panukpuk and Bulbulao sitios, Poblacion Kitaotao, province.

Three Army soldiers were killed in the firefight, the reports said. The fatalities were identified as Cpl. Ricardo Gabriel, Pfc. Philip Domingo and Pfc. Albert Ignas.

Land mine used

The renewed fighting between government forces and NPA rebels started two weeks ago when communist rebels killed nine soldiers and wounded 20 in an ambush that sprung with the use of a land mine in Calinog, Iloilo on Nov. 19. It was one of the bloodiest attacks by the NPA in recent years.

The war followed by a string of clashes in Quezon province.

On Nov. 25, a policeman was killed while three others were wounded when rebels attacked a Globe Telecom Inc. cell site in Tayug. Three more soldiers were killed and nine wounded in a clash with NPA rebels in Tayug the following day.

Another Globe tower

During this week, the rebels also bombed another Globe communication tower in Lutay.

The military reminded not killed nine alleged communist rebels in Barangay San Agustin in Pilar, Iloilo, on Nov. 21. Among those killed was spokesman Ivan an, according to military groups who denounced the killings as a massacre of unarmed farmers by members of the 61st 19th Infantry Battalion. The military claimed it was a gunbattle.

Armed Forces Chief of Staff Gen. Generoso Senga has ordered calls for an inde dictorate ceasefire and vowed to press on with counteroffensives, which has forced hundreds of families in Tayug and exile by rebels in Quezon to flee their homes.

LIGHTNING QUICK
A member of the Rabat-tang Makabayan takes off a police break up a fighting rally held by the militant group in Cubao, Quezon City, earlier this month-the anniversary. The group called for the ouster of President Arroyo.

Human rights worker slain in Ilocos Sur

By Leonila Baltazar and Dexter Cabalza
PDI Northern Luzon Bureau

SAN ESTEBAN, ILOCOS SUR – A coordinator of a church-based human rights organization in the Ilocos and Cordillera regions was shot and killed by a lone gunman on the national highway here on Monday night.

Jose "Pepe" Manggiha, 51, 57, coordinator of the Rural Missionaries of the Philippines (RMP), was waiting for a ride at about 10 p.m. when a man stepped on him of him, police said. A man alighted from the vehicle and shot Manggiha with a .45-cal. pistol.

Manggiha had just spoken at a seminar sponsored by the Ilocos Human Rights Advocates in Barangay Quirino here and was waiting for a bus for Metro Manila to return weekend. He was going to pick up his wife in Metro Manila, according to Beverly Longid, vice chair of the Cordillera Human Rights Alliance (CHRA).

Manggiha's companions, who were at the seminar learned about the attack from the truck driver who had taken him to the highway. They found Manggiha lying 15 meters away from a roadside shed. His cellular phone and wallet were missing.

21 bullet wounds

Longid called the attack "a clear intimidation of human rights," noting that Manggiha had sustained 21 bullet wounds.

Sister Genevieve Duinot, coordinator of the RMP in the Ilocos, said Manggiha had received death threats through text messages after Bantay Hustisya Ilocos coalition Ilocos (media) was killed in March this year.

"He would tell me that he would receive threats advising him that he would be next after [media]. We believe that this is work-related," Duinot said. "The RMP condemns the killing of Pepe. We ask for justice and we call on the government to stop terrorism against progressive church workers."

Duinot and Longid said Manggiha was visited early last year by two persons and had taken part in campaigns against the condemnation of the Alno Kiwas and military operations in the Sierra region.

Uplift peasants

RMP was organized in 1969 by various orders of Roman Catholic nuns in the country to uplift the conditions of Philippine peasants and youth. For land reform. It was expanded in the 1980s to include priests and at one time espoused liberation theology.

Pastor William Hoiano, coordinator of the Ecumenical Ecumenical Council in the Cordillera Region), said Manggiha was a fearless and sincere worker who "worked with the poor farmers."

Another attack

In Bangued, Abra, another activist was shot and wounded by a man on a motorcycle on Tuesday morning.

Reynaldo Labod Tevendaro, 41, was on his way to his office in the Department of Agrarian Reform in Bangued when he was attacked.

Tevendaro is president of the DAR Employees Association (Dareva) in Abra and a volunteer chiller of Bantay, a legal center of Cordillera indigenous peoples and a former staff member of Task Force Detainees of the Philippines (TFDP). He was under observation at a local hospital where doctors said his lungs had been punctured by a bullet.

Police said it was too early if the two attacks were related. With a report from AP

KM calls on youth to overthrow GMA

By Micah Pujo

THE MILITANT GROUP Kilusang Mabalosan (KM) has called on the youth to join the struggle to overthrow the Arroyo administration.

In a statement to media yesterday, KM spokesperson Andrea Gonzales II said it was "the responsibility of every nationalist citizen and country" to take up arms to topple the government.

"We can only put an end to [a semi-colonial and semi-feudal system] through waging the armed struggle in the countryside. We fervently call upon the Filipino youth and students to take part in the national democratic revolution and join the New People's Army in building a brighter future," the KM statement said.

Gonzales said the administration could only be held responsible for "hundreds of thousands of people flooding the streets that will cut off the bankrupt Arroyo government from its remaining support."

The statement also called on "nationalist young officers" to join the people in ousting Arroyo, accusing members of the military.

Gonzales said the Arroyo administration had failed to address the interests of the people in general.

He also accused the President of protecting the interests of the United States, saying the government appointed no less interest in pursuing the right-wing agenda of American Marines in Subic.

Gonzales's statement was issued following the traditional lightning rally in celebration of KM's anniversary.

KM, a youth organization under the aegis of the National Democratic Front, was founded by Jose Ma. Sison, Communist Party of the Philippines founder. It is celebrating its 41st anniversary today.

It went underground when President Ferdinand Marcos declared martial law in 1972 and was at the forefront of the struggle against the dictatorship.

ARMM first to enact law on forest mgm't

By Blanche L. Rivera

THE AUTONOMOUS REGION IN Muslim Mindanao (ARMM) has passed the country's first law on sustainable forest management, paving the way for the protection of the region's remaining forest cover.

The ARMM government recently validated the controversial logging rules and regulations of the Muslim Mindanao Autonomy Act No. 161, also known as the Regional Sustainable Forest Management Act of 2004, signalling the start of the implementation.

"Only ARMM has this law in the country," said Bai Sandra A. Sema, information officer of the Philippine Environmental Governance (Enogov) which helped draft the law. "ARMM's forests are highly threatened."

The ARMM had 139,607 hectares of closed-canopy forests (old forests and primary growth forests) and 323,000 hectares of open-canopy forests (secondary growth and other forests) as of last year, its mangrove swamps cover 51,620 hectares.

Forestry regulations applying to the rest of the country are outlined in PD 705, a law that (as once issued by former President Ferdinand Marcos, which were the Department of Environment and Natural Resources (DENR) control and mitigate.

ARMM's forest management law would compel local governments within the autonomous region to have forest management plans identifying which forests should be protected and which ones could be economically exploited under specific conditions.

Espanto said the ARMM law incorporated the Shariah law on practices that would be allowed inside production and protected forests.

The ARMM law bans commercial logging in protected areas, promotes the rehabilitation of watershed areas and promotes reforestation in the region.

Espanto said the law also mandates the local governments to give priority to forest development initiated by the indigenous communities and non-commercial firms.

"We're just waiting for the existing timber license agreements to expire," he said.

He said the law incorporated the participation of communities to ensure that "there is an ordinance between the DENR and the LGUs" in the forest inventories.

Equip't failure delaying flights

DEPICT SOME flight delays in the next few weeks.

The reason: The International Hand Telecommunications Network (AFTN), the main piece of equipment used by the air traffic controllers (ATCs) to transmit important flight information, has been down since last month because of power failure.

Jesus said morning and departing flights were only delayed by five minutes, but the airline Operations General (AOG) said the delays have been as much as 10 to 15 minutes.

In fact, departing aircraft have to queue at the Naia runway for take off, something rarely seen in other airports, Jesus said.

Alden Cheng

WEDNESDAY, NOVEMBER 30, 2005 PHILIPPINE DAILY INQUIRER A1

SPORTS

E-mail sr_sports@inquirer.com.ph

Lilia Tolentino & Philostates

Text us your feedback: inquirer sport <name/type/cell number> to 2207 (Globe) or 2803 (Smart)

Molina prevents victory shutout

ATHLETICS MEDAL TALLY
(as of 7:30 a.m., Nov. 29, 2005)

Country	G	S	B
Philippines	10	11	10
Singapore	7	3	2
Thailand	3	2	3
Indonesia	2	3	3
Malaysia	2	1	2
Cambodia	1	0	0
Myanmar	0	2	0
Brunei	0	0	1
Laos	0	0	1

By Marc Anthony Reyes

LOS BAÑOS—MIGUEL Molina prevented a victory shutout for the Filipino swimmers last night, snaring the men's 400-meter individual medley gold in the 23rd Southeast Asian Games at the Trace Aquatics Center.

The 22-year-old Molina, who competes in the UE NCAA under the banner of the University of California in Berkeley, burned out a strong freestyle leg to wear out Indonesia's Nurulfiati Akbar in four minutes and 16.23 seconds.

LONE PHILIPPINE GOLD: Miguel Molina rules the men's 400-meter individual medley, nosing out his Indonesian rival, at the Trace Aquatic Center, Los Baños, Laguna. NONOY LACSON

Akbar placed second in 4:27.90 and Singapore's Joseph Lee Yeow secured up third with 4:32.30. RP's Ferdinand Hyglaem was fifth in 4:36.21.

The 5P women's relay team topped the breaststroke in the 4x100-meter relay through Sherwin Gandiangan, Erica Tarazo, Chrystel Lagumbay and Nicole Santiago, who timed 4:34.75.

Singapore continued its supremacy in the sport by winning four golds, two by the irrepressible Joscelyn Yeo, who played possum in the latter's title morning.

"Yes, relax kasi ayaw niya nang ganito pero recently, upheld her reputation as the most successful swimmer in the meet, taking the women's 100m

KRISTINE Fiesta Alora (right) scores against Phoutsao Kaypeseng of Laos in their gold-medal match in the women's featherweight class.

RP jins back to earth with 1 gold, 2 silvers

MANILA CITY—ORAS, ANOTHER GOLD MEDAL SWEEP SPOILED! have been an overkill.

But the four-gold opening day act was just too tough to follow and the Filipino jins managed just one gold and two silver medals yesterday at the Cuneta Astrodome.

Kristine Elaine Alora, an 18-year-youngster Filipino jin in the 52kg featherweight division, provided the day's lone spark for the RP squad by winning the women's featherweight title.

Alora opened up a 12-3 lead against Phoutsao Kaypeseng of Laos in the finals before the match was stopped just seconds before the final buzzer and the Filipino was declared the winner by RSC (referee stopped contest).

Coming after Alexander Brosas strolled again for the men's welterweight silver medal after losing to Indon Randa Nugroho, 3-2.

Ma. Criselda Bersabe also bowed to a much superior Thai Oyanisa Promwaree in the women's welterweight finals, 8-0.

Thailand claimed two gold medals in the men's featherweight and women's welterweight. Vietnam, Indonesia and Malaysia took home one gold each.

Vietnam's Do Thi Bich Banh beat Aye Aye Myat of Myanmar, 6-3, for the women's flyweight title. Malaysian Roslendy Yahya Hotra prevailed in sudden death over Thai Bech Sathikitiskun to take the men's flyweight division.

Jeffrey Figueroa failed to advance in the medal round of the men's flyweight while Marcus Rivera, Jr. lost to Fazlik Kitom Syagata of Indonesia in the men's bantamweight.

Lavenia Cruz also crumpled over Yuwaporn Guesopon of Thailand with a counter 49-16 in the sudden death match in the women's flyweight division elimination round, but lost to Sue Ete Hpu, 3-2.

The RP jins have already duplicated their five-gold haul in Vientiane two years ago following earlier wins Oswald Geisler, Nhomerlo Sia, Noel Bacsain, and Ireliet Singson.

But coach Stephen Fernandez said he expects more gold when defending champions Dax Illiohi and Veronica Domingo compete in the men's and women's middleweight divisions today.

The Philippines biggest medal haul in the biennial meet came in 1987 with eight gold and eight silvers.

But here in the day, a couple of close matches sparked protests from the losers.

Rocky Trivio / Filipino

Alcano-Andam blast 'em

TUK PAIR OF ROBBIN ALCANO AND LEONARDO ANdam delivered another gold medal for the Philippines in the billiards and snooker competition of the 22nd Southeast Asian Games last Tuesday at the Makati Coliseum.

Andam, a four-gold winner in the 1991 Manila SEA Games edition and Alcano, a former 42-Balls finalist of the Sun, normalized the duo of Tepatu Amnuaeh and Amnuaipon Chotipong, 8-6, in the finals of the 13-ball double-rotation to raise RP's haul to five golds.

"Again we thank God for another victory," said Alcano, the last amateur player in the region who also won the gold medal in the 13-ball single-rotation last Sunday.

Alcano and Andam beat the duo of Singaporean Tan Tiong Boon and Chong Keng Kwong, 5-4, in the quarterfinals, then whipped the Indonesian pair of Muhamad Amanto and Muhamad Zulfiki, 5-0, in a lopsided semifinal matchup.

Thailand, on the other hand, disposed of Malaysia, hammered by Ooi Swee Tiam and Filipino finalist Biboy Sanz, 5-4, in the other semifinal duel.

"Four out of five, it's not bad," said Amateur Billiards and Snooker Confgress of the Philippines president. The Philippines' lone bid-ners in the men's snooker doubles tilted, Mark Pagulayan and Jonric Ai-ra-bedra vs. Rim Pasat IV Phrasri/Sirichok Sirasukhan of Singapore, 3-0.

The Sinthanda duo bowed to Malaysia, 1-1, in the battle for the bronze medal.

The RP contingent to the Team opened their campaign with a bang by blasting Vietnam, 3-0.

Singapore and Thailand will dispute the gold medal.

Marlon Bernardino

LEE Yuen Certeza celebrates the Philippines' victory in 10-ball.

Fueled by Negrense blood

BARE EYE

Ricardo Trimiñal

MANDALUYONG CITY—THE BEST WAY TO TURN public sentiment, silver-tier shabby last-meeting for a ride, is to take a short ride, either on a pedicab or motorbike.

From Lucena Avenue, the visitor decides to walk to the not-insulted Banjos, and thereby discovers the shortest route to human joy.

There are incredible headlines screaming of victory on the sidewalk newspaper stalls.

As though in a dream, the reporter sees all of monumental triumphs, instead of assorted failures and mounting miseries.

Suddenly gold medals, over 20 since by Philippine athletes, far outnumber the medals counted by lawbreakers and misdemeanors committed in the country.

* * *

This is exactly like waking up in a different country.

There's this towering feeling of being in a new day among citizens, industrious people whose leaders don't known how to die.

There had been predictions of the Philippines figuring strongly in the current Southeast Asian Games, but the early surge in the overall leadership was unbelievable.

Call it whatever name you please.

This is the SEA Games feeling, a healing of all past aches.

It may not linger for long, but savor it while it's still there.

* * *

It's no great coincidence that the SEA Games fever has caught up with this sequence in this capital of gentle, fun-loving people.

Bacolod happens to host at least three major disciplines—football, boxing, volleyball—a distinction no other city outside of Manila can claim.

The games are indeed wrapping a tsunami of great gains, but this is an apt reward for a people that had given the Philippines some of our national sporting greats.

Rancho Arlis, host Francisco Guilledo, was a Negrense who made the Negrenses famous. While it took 70 years to screen the world flyweight boxing crown, He was the first Asian to capture a world boxing title.

Other than nobleness, Negros has a host of other sparring greats.

Onyok Velasco, who got cheated of the gold medal in the Atlanta Olympics, was born and raised in these parts.

* * *

And where else in the country should the SEA Games football event be contested?

Nowhere else but here, a rare province that has remained the bedrock of soccer, while the whole country continued to threaten uselessly in basketball fever.

So what if Bacolod has also become rotten all on the presence of the finest fighting cocks in the land?

It's no crime coincidence (again) that the RP campaign to retool The Southeast Asian boxing supremacy from Thailand is being fueled by Negrense blood.

The country's finest concussioners happen to have emerged from here, as southern Amateur Boxing Association of the Philippines president Manny Lopez.

Joel Velasco, brother of Olympic silver medalist Onyok, is himself a winner of the bronze medal in the Barcelona Olympics who now handles the powerhouse RP women's team in the current Games.

In short, this is no time to complain about Bacolod being made to host at least three main disciplines (clubs and a single event) but have silence for dissidences.

Negros has earned what it is currently enjoying as a main venue of RP sports resurgence.

The best thing to do is investigate if it's indeed the unusual diet of children found the coralgrowable fish meals, or the quality of their native sugar that fuel the winning blends of Negrense sports greats.

Molina prevents . . .

Turn to page A12

freestyle and the 200m individual medley—her 200m and 400m gold medals.

Her exams merely re-quality to the heats.

Singapore's Chinese import Tao Li won a third gold in the 200m backstroke before Ryan Tay Thejong, Gary Tan Lee Yit, Mark Chay Zang Jun and Marcus Chiah Mingzhe topped the men's 4x100 relay.

The Singapore quartet clocked 7:95.65 to break the SEAG record of 7:20.82 set by another Singapore team in Kuala Lumpur in 2001. Thailand was second in 7:42.22 and Indonesia third in 7:43.16.

Thailand won the women's 4x100 relay also in record fashion, finishing in 8:09.95 that erased the 1999 mark of 8:20.33 posted by the Thai squad (Singapore finished second with a time of 8:34.95).

Filipino Nina Time failed miserably against Yeo in the 200 IM where she placed fourth (2:20.60) behind Thailand's Nantika Thewsompoonthorn (2:14.26) and Singapore's Hiroleene Tee Wei Min, who placed third and second, respectively.

Malaysia got into the winning column through Alex Lim's bang for in the men's 200m backstroke. He overcame Singaporeans Gary Tan Lee Yit (2:07.26) and Marcus Chiah Mingzhe (2:08.80) who bagged the silver and bronze.

Liana Tantilo, who hails from nearby San Pablo City, failed to get inspiration from her relatives, friends and classmates cheering from the stands, placing fifth (1:23.65) in her favorite 100m backstroke won by Yeo, who timed 1:17.55.

Defending champion Nantharnmay Chaiharboon could only finish second in 2:38.66 and Indonesia's Muthiah Wilson came in third in 2:38.95.

Lijen Sumeray placed seventh in the event in 2:56.05.

The Philippines earned 19 fourth and last in the men's 4x200m freestyle relay, an event another RP team won in Vientiane. 9RDI's report from Ooi Swee Tiam

In Zambo, US troops training RP forces

SIBUAWAN, ZAMBOANGA DEL NORTE – PUBLIC all eyes are on Subic because of rumors US troops had joined Philippine military operations against the Abu Sayyaf, close to 50 US servicemen are conducting joint exercises with their Filipino counterparts here and in nearby Zamboanga del Sur.

Dubbed Balance Piston 00-1, the maneuver training exercises here and in Guipos town in Zamboanga del Sur actually started in October without much fanfare.

Even the military's Southern Command (Southcom) initially said it had no information about the US-led training here.

Maj. Gamal Hayudini, Southcom public information officer, on Monday said he had no idea about the activity.

"I am going to check this," he said.

The following day, Hayudini confirmed the training where "60 Filipino soldiers are participating."

"The training was being conducted by a battalion of interoperation troops," Hayudini said.

Lt. Col. Mark Zimmer, public affairs officer of Joint Special Operations Task Force Philippines, told this reporter in exercises, which would end the first week of December, were being conducted "as per request of the Philippine military and the Philippine government."

"We are here to train, assist and advise and the training was until December," Zimmer, who visited the US troops here on Saturday, said.

Lt. Col. Ramon Pimentel, commander of the Army's 44th Infantry Battalion, said the exercises are counterinsurgency, life-saving techniques and combat training similar to Cobra Gold.

"Actually they are already in the last phase of the exercise," Pimentel said.

"The objective is to upgrade the capability of our soldiers on small weapons techniques," Hayudini said.

Maj. John Bodor, commander of Charlie Co. of the 2nd US Army Battalion, said three exercises were being jointly undertaken, one in Guipos with the 51st Infantry Battalion, with the 44th IB and the 102nd Infantry Brigade in Ipil, Zamboanga Sibugay.

"So far the training is running smoothly," Bodor said. – Julie S. Alipala, PDI Mindanao Bureau

US fighter plane still can't take off

ONE WEEK AFTER IT MADE AN EMERGENCY landing at the Ninoy Aquino International Airport (Naia), due to mechanical problems, a US Air Force F-16 fighter jet remained parked in a private hangar at the Naia.

The gamma jet is also parked at the Balagtas Aero Aviation Corp. hangar. Fighter jet troops fly to parts.

Chito Sindoni, officer in charge of the Manila International Airport Authority (Miaa) operations department, yesterday said repairs were still being done on the disabled jet.

"I was told it could take another two weeks to fix," Sindoni said in a phone interview.

On Nov. 12, the missile-armed supersonic aircraft, piloted by Capt. Justin Bagwin, was en route to Misawa Air Base in Japan from Singapore when it encountered problems in its hydraulic systems and requested to make an emergency landing at the Naia.

Miaa officials said the aircraft had already lost its steering and brakes when it landed.

Some 50 laborers at the Miaa had to push the disabled state-of-the-art aircraft from the runway to the hangar as the Miaa's towing vehicles were designed to pull only commercial jets. – Nikko Dizon

The Daily Gospel

Wednesday, November 22, 2000
1st Week of Advent

1st Reading: Rom 10:9-18
Gospel: Matthew 4:18-22

As Jesus walked by the lake of Galilee, he saw two brothers, Simon called Peter, and Andrew his brother, casting a net into the lake, for they were fishermen. He said to them, "Come, follow me, and I will make you fish for people."

At once they left their nets and followed him.

He went on from there and saw two other brothers, James, the son of Zebedee, and his brother John in a boat with their father Zebedee, mending their nets. Jesus called them.

At once they left the boat and their father and followed him.

Commentary

Jesus calls eight of fishers and his brother Simon coming their turn into the sea and announce him to follow him. He catches him in his daily work and family and has them follow Jesus' and we later and goes after the company of others who have been called, a new family and say their new world in the world, meaning the sick, the persecuted, the deranged and all who suffer to a set of healing and hope. Why do we spend our lives catching all good and meeting in the net of God's embrace? Why will you catch today?

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US Marines deny raping woman at Subic Bay

asked the Olongapo prosecutor's office to dismiss the complaint.

It was the first time since the alleged rape that the five servicemen accused of it faced reporters. They are being held by the US Embassy.

Benjamin Formoso, counsel for the rich Ebuen, Daniel Smith, said he did not see the fourth's affidavit because the evidence from the woman's lawyers were being labeled as "a prosecutorial issue."

According to Filipino driver Tauresio Antonio Jr., another accused, it was Smith (about his colleagues) were penalizing to abuse the women.

Olongapo City Prosecutor Pendicton Ishmael-Yusi Galapia-G. Jamero, Fiscal Petra, and Jess. 9 to file the driver's counter-affidavit.

The lawyers of the respondents said the complainant have until Dec. 14 to file their memorandum on the case. Asked about Olongapo prosecutor's office to dismiss the complaint.

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The lawyers of the respondents and

'Funds key to helping OFWs'

By Leila B. Salaverria

IF CONGRESS WANTS TO HELP overseas Filipino workers who are in jail abroad, it should look into how the funds allocated every year for legal assistance for the workers are being spent, the militant group Migrante said.

Migrante chair Connie Regalado said promises that under the Migrant Workers Act of 1995, P100 million is supposed to be provided in the annual budget to help OFWs who get into trouble with the law.

The money is given to the Legal Assistance for Migrant Affairs which is under the Department of Foreign Affairs (DFA).

"There are funds automatically given for the OFWs who get into legal trouble. How did the DFA use them?" Were these used to help the jailed workers?" Regalado said in a phone interview.

In a recent report to the House of Representatives, the DFA said more than 4,500 OFWs were languishing in foreign jails.

Following this report, the House appropriations committee said it would consider increasing the amount of income that Philippine embassies are allowed to retain so the funds could be used to help the imprisoned workers.

Migrante has asked the lower house to also look into the use of funds of the Overseas Workers Welfare Administration (OWWA). It said Migrante had learned from sources that the DFA had been illegally borrowing funds from the OWWA to help jailed OFWs.

Regalado said the DFA is supposed to have its own funds for distressed OFWs and should not be borrowing from the OWWA.

She also said the government should look into the conditions of the jailed OFWs. She said Migrante had received reports that the children of jailed OFWs in Saudi Arabia were staying with their parents in prison because they had no one to care for them.

3 Filipino women raped in Kuwait

By Veit Contreras

THREE FILIPINO WOMEN were allegedly raped in separate incidents in a span of 10 days in Kuwait, the Department of Foreign Affairs (DFA) reported yesterday.

The DFA public information desk withheld details, but said the Philippine Embassy in the oil-rich state had been providing counseling, medical and legal assistance to the women.

An official, who requested anonymity, said the last incident occurred on Nov. 25. He said the victims were picked up on a street of Kuwait City and forced into a car by still unidentified suspects.

The three women, all overseas workers, were raped more than once, the official said.

Foreign Secretary Alberto Romulo has ordered the release of funds "to secure a repatriation" in the three cases.

Last May three Kuwaiti policemen were meted out prison terms for raping a Filipina woman in November 2003.

In November 2004, four Filipino women were rescued from a white slavery syndicate also in Kuwait. Six months later, court summoned their four employers, back-foreign nationals, to life imprisonment.

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Palace eyes cutting $1.5B of RP debt

By Gil Cabacungan Jr.

MALACAÑANG IS NOW SEEKING CONgressional ratification of its $1.5 billion of the country's outstanding debt next year to take advantage of the peso's shifting ups and heavy inflows of remittances from overseas Filipino workers (OFWs).

Finance Secretary Margarito Teves told the Inquirer that his department together with the Bangko Sentral ng Pilipinas and Bureau of the Treasury were looking into paying part of the country's P1.5-trillion debt using savings generated by the unanticipated strength of the peso and the surplus in dollar reserves due to remittances.

Press Secretary Ignacio Bunye had hinted that President Macapagal-Arroyo was considering this debt reduction plan after meeting with the Filipino Hong Kong Chamber of Commerce during a stopover at the Asian Dutch territory last week.

"The billions of pesos released to interest payments could be channeled to more pressing services. Or alternatively, we can partially pre-terminate some of our foreign obligations," Bunye said yesterday.

Albay Rep. Joey Salceda, macroeconomic advisor to Gloria Arroyo, said that at the rate the country's peso is moving, the Philippines could afford not to borrow from abroad or even more locally for at least one year, which is equivalent to pre-terminating part of the country's debt.

"We have locally-bred full fiat currency peso and dollar reserves. Our reserves are overcomings. We can now opt not to make new borrowings because of our strong peso and high dollar reserves," Salceda said.

He proposed a "bond holiday" of up to one year.

Salceda, who proposed the peso hitting $1 next year, said remittances should jump 20 percent next year to $14 billion (including $3 billion from informal sources).

Bunye of dollars would be left after the country pays off the all bill ($4.5 billion), interest payments of foreign loans ($3 billion) and fuel imports ($3 billion).

Based on these estimates, the Philippines could afford to let go of $1.5 billion in debt next year, Salceda said.

Peso up . . .

From page A1

"The continued peso improvement is due to sustained inflows, particularly from OFW remittances as reported in this issue of the week," said Bangko Sentral ng Pilipinas Governor Rafael Buenaventura.

He said overall positive sentiment in the market (due to progress in the government's fiscal consolidation) is also propping up the peso.

Roland Arroyo, treasurer of Chinatrust Commercial Bank Philippines, said "some OFWs were sure panicky, unwinding (a) source dollars so their recipients can take advantage of a higher exchange rate soon before it goes further appreciates."

"Normally, when there's a long weekend, dollar supply builds up so the peso appreciates right after the market reopens, especially if there's not much corporate demand," he said.

The peso has traded at the $1 level on May 3, but weakened thereafter due to political protests that threatened to unseat President Macapagal-Arroyo.

The most-traders product when the Supreme Court suspended the suspended values-added tax law on July 1 and key economic managers led by then finance secretary Jose Pramis resigned the Cabinet on July 9.

Yen factor

Arroyo said the peso was also lifted by the strengthening of the Japanese yen against the US dollar.

He said the US dollar had failed to break past the crucial 1:00 resistance against the yen, thus pushing up the regional markets.

Jonathan Ravelas, chief economist at Banco de Oro Universal Bank, said there was pent-up demand for pesos over the long weekend, as OFW households exchanged dollars to meet the Christmas rush.

Since the long [illegible] bank withdraws weeks away, most officers are likely to post in, allowing the foreign exchange market to retest the $1:$1 level against the greenback, according to Ravelas.

Record remittances

The BSP expects remittances from OFWs, routed through banks to hit a record of $13.5 billion by year's end or 20 percent better than the inflows in 2003.

Migrant workers are expected to pump in at least $11.2 billion through banking channels next year, 1.9 percent higher than the projected contribution this year.

The Philippines has been relying on huge remittances from OFWs to boost domestic consumer demand. Most of the remittances are from the United States, Saudi Arabia, Italy, Japan, Hong Kong, the United Kingdom, the United Arab Emirates and Singapore.

Remittances are rising although the number of Filipinos deployed abroad is declining, according to Socioeconomic Planning Secretary Augusto Santos.

"It only means one thing—our OFWs are earning more," he said.

Santos acknowledged that a stronger peso would make Philippine exports less competitive, but said there's no net impact of the strengthening of the currency would be positive.

Boost exports

"The peso appreciation will not hurt exports but at the same time, it will make our import bill drop. By contrast, all sectors for about 37 percent of the economy's energy requirements," Santos said.

He said the further strengthening of the peso would result in more interest payment savings for the government.

Rep. Joey Salceda, chair of the House committee on ways and means and adviser to President Macapagal-Arroyo, said the peso could further rise as high as 40:$1 against the US dollar—as low as the height of the Asian currency turmoil.

But he said OFW inflows were benefiting only the financial sector and were hardly trickling down to the agriculture, manufacturing and services sectors, which could pump prime the economy and benefit more people.

Oil prices, politics cut growth to 4.1%

Previous page A1

latest figures meant it would be very unlikely the government would now hit its 5.5-percent GDP growth target for 2006.

Although GDP growth slowed, there was one to be glad, as the country's gross national product (GNP) grew 6.6 percent, according to Tetangco. GNP is GDP plus earnings of Filipinos abroad, mainly remittances from workers.

The latest GNP figure was higher than the 6 percent recorded in the second quarter and the 5.7 percent posted in the third quarter of last year.

Tetangco noted that net factor income from abroad grew 38.7 percent, a significant improvement from the 0.9-percent decline in the third quarter of 2005.

But the increase in remittances from overseas Filipino workers (OFWs) was not enough to prop up personal consumption, which grew 4.8 percent in the third quarter, lower than the 5.1 percent recorded last year.

"It seems families of OFWs are not splurging on the extra windfall, as seen in the steady rate for consumption. Rather, they appear to be saving the money, as hinted by rising growth in ratio to financial services," Tetangco said.

Sluggish exports

Earnings from exports grew only 0.9 percent in the third quarter and 2.1 percent for the first three quarters of the year, way below the 8 percent growth target for the full year. In 2005, exports grew by about 13 percent.

Benjamin Diokno, economics professor at the University of the Philippines, said high oil prices had affected global demand, especially for electronics, the country's major export product.

High international oil prices are forcing consumers to cut down on spending for goods now that are considered necessities, according to Diokno.

He said the economy's heavy reliance on electronics, which accounts for about 70 percent of total export earnings, was proving to be a disadvantage in times of weakening global demand.

"Also, it is possible that we are already losing much of our market from competing countries such as China," Diokno told the Inquirer.

Creeping growth

Agriculture grew 1.0 percent in the third quarter, creeping on all growth.

Services—which includes transportation and communication, trade, finance, real estate, private services and government services—led the way with growth of 5.1 percent, although lower than the 7.0 percent posted in the third quarter last year, National Economic and Development Authority (Neda) officials said in a news conference.

But Tetangco said the service sector was expected to post robust growth next year, with the continuing boom in the business process outsourcing sector.

The industry sector—composed of mining and quarrying, manufacturing, construction and utilities—grew 3.9 percent, higher than the 3.0 percent recorded in the same period last year.

Floods, bird flu scare

President Macapagal-Arroyo had been counting on agriculture to stage a rebound in the second half to ensure the economy would grow 5.6 percent in the last six months of the year and achieve the 2006 growth target of 5.5 percent.

"The expected rebound in the agriculture sector in the third quarter did not materialize due to floods that delayed harvests," said Jessie Arroyo, director of Neda's policy and planning staff.

He likewise noted the adverse effects of the bird flu scare detected for poultry products.

Although Mr Arroyo's allies in the House of Representatives quashed an impeachment bid against her in September, the opposition is continuing its efforts to unseat her, calling for investigations of the executive department.

"The political uncertainty brought about the impeachment case and the stability of oil prices weighed on the economy," Tetangco said.

He said the political turmoil was "causing some uncertainty for investment decisions."

Rebound

Despite the slowdown, Tetangco was confident the economy would rebound in the fourth quarter based on recent positive indications such as tourist arrivals, power consumption and trade data, as well as the recent strong performance of the stock market.

Trade-mostly the economy grew its strongest growth in the fourth quarter.

Private sector economists said the Philippines was now likely to see full-year growth of well below 5.5 percent but that might be more sustainable than the higher levels targeted.

"I'm looking at full-year GDP growth of 4.5-4.5 percent area. But the bona market is very soft and manufacturing is taking a back seat," said Emma Patag, economist and corporate information officer at Rizal Commercial Banking Corp.

"But this is more sustainable and better than the boom-bust cyclicities that we expect

Container van yields endangered turtle shells, dried sea horses

By Lelo B. Balaverio

THE PHILIPPINE COAST GUARD yesterday found nine sacks of turtle shells and 23 sacks of dried sea horses in a container van it seized recently a month ago on suspicion that it contained contraband items.

The turtle shells and dried sea horses were discovered when the PCG conducted an inventory of the container van's contents yesterday.

The Bureau of Fisheries and Aquatic Resources certified yesterday that trade in these two items were illegal.

Sea horses and marine turtles are classified as endangered species, that is, they have a very high risk of extinction in the wild in the near future.

The capture, collection, trade and utilization of endangered species are banned under the Convention on International Trade in Endangered Species of Wild Flora and Fauna (CITES) and other international agreements.

Section 97 of the Philippine Fisheries Code of 1998 prohibits "fishing or taking of rare, threatened or endangered species."

Marine turtle poaching is punishable by 12 to 20 years imprisonment.

PCG lawyer Ernesto Lazaro Tolibas said the sacks of turtle shells and sea horses were hidden underneath sacks of dried sea cucumbers.

The manifest of the 20-ft container van said that it contained only sea cucumbers worth $7,990, or about P400,000, that were to be shipped to Vietnam.

The discovery of the turtle shells and sea horses made inspector, identified as Ernar Al-panichin, not only liable for violating regulations on the trade of endangered species but also for misdeclaring the van's contents.

The van had been in the PCG's custody at the Manila North Harbor since Nov. 2 after the PCG received information that it might contain contraband species.

The PCG explained that it could not inspect the container van's contents immediately as the Bureau of Customs said it had to wait for the owner to appear. When the owner failed to show up after a given period, the BOC gave its permission to open the van.

The PCG was able to conduct the inventory only yesterday after the van was transferred to the National Capital Region Inland Container Corporation in Barangay Tondo, Manila.

Tolibas said the PCG would take custody of the confiscated turtle shells and sea horses.

Malaria still around – DOH

MALARIA, THE OLD mosquito-borne disease, many thought had been eradicated, is still around. In fact, it besets around 11 million Filipinos in six of 79 provinces in the country.

Dr. Mario Baquilod, chief of the Department of Health's Division for infectious diseases, told reporters yesterday the disease remained endemic in 760 of 1,600 towns and in 9,368 of 42,079 barangays.

Health Secretary Francisco Duque III said the government had been wasting "money, time and effort" against malaria, especially as 2002 statistics were reduced by 50 percent, from 93,047 in 1998 to 34,787.

But cases began increasing again in 2003 and 2004, Baquilod reported.

In 2005 alone, 302 died out of 68,424 people who got sick with malaria, according to a statement by the World Health Organization.

Most of the cases occurred in Mindanao which has been the focus of the total "Roll Back Malaria" effort by the WHO, DOH and the Australian government.

The WHO said malaria was most prevalent in the provinces of Palawan, Aguijan, Tawi-Tawi, Sulu and Quarino. They account for more than 67 percent of the total cases and 92 percent of the deaths, the WHO said.

A total of 25 provinces fall under Category A for reporting more than 1,000 cases every year. Gloria Jeanne V. Esguerra

HIV/AIDS spreading across Asia, says WHO

DRUG USE AND PROSTITUTION are driving the HIV/AIDS epidemic across Asia and the Pacific, including China, where the virus has spread to all 31 provinces and regions despite efforts to contain it, the World Health Organization warned Tuesday.

WHO regional director Shigeru Omi, in a statement marking World Aids Day on Thursday, called on member states "to act boldly and urgently" to change the course of the epidemic.

5M people infected

Despite assistance to prevent the AIDS virus from spreading, 5 million people worldwide were needlessly infected last year, adding to the 40 million already living with the virus, the WHO said.

In the Western Pacific, 1.5 million people live with HIV/AIDS, and nearly all concentrate in the region have epidemics breaking out people with high-risk behaviors.

The virus has spread to all 31 provinces and autonomous regions in China, the world's most populous country, the WHO said, warning that some 10 million Chinese may be infected by 2010.

Needle sharing among drug users is the main route of HIV transmission in China, Vietnam and Malaysia, the WHO said.

In Malaysia alone, three-quarters of all reported infections were connected to injecting drugs.

Cambodia has the highest national prevalence rate in Asia, with 2.6 percent of the population suffering from HIV.

"We know what works and what doesn't. So why has the necessary action to prevent the virus from spreading not been taken?" Omi asked. "Why is the epidemic still growing and not reversing?"

The United Nations has set a number of goals in response to HIV/AIDS, including reversing the epidemic by 2015 and the so-called "3 by 5" goal of providing anti-retroviral treatment to 3 million people living with HIV in developing countries by the end of 2005.

Antiretroviral therapy

Progress has been made with access to antiretroviral therapy, with one million people in developing countries receiving it as of June this year. To date, the number of people receiving treatment increased by 54 percent in the first half of 2004 to 1.18 million, or roughly one in seven of those who need it.

WHO said that despite the progress, the "3 by 5" initiative is still short of its target. AP

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The WORLD

Ellen Lorenne B. Guevo

134 dead, 15 trapped in China mine blast

QITAIHE, CHINA—AN EXPLOSION AT A COAL mine in remote northeastern China killed 134 workers and left another 15 trapped underground, state media said Monday, amid frantic rescue efforts to find survivors.

A total of 221 miners were underground when the blast and fire occurred about 9:40 p.m. (1340 GMT) Sunday at the state-run Dongfeng coal mine, some 50 miles (81 km) from Hulunbeiqing province, not far from the Russian border.

However, after a day of intense rescue efforts, 72 survivors had been pulled from the rubble, said the state-affiliated China News Service.

The official Xinhua news agency, which gave the same casualty toll, said 56 of the survivors are being treated in a hospital.

Officials at the mine refused to describe the situation or the death toll, but video on China Central Television showed gaping holes in an entrance placed at the mine site where explosions had ripped the top of the earth.

"It's all the management's fault," a woman surnamed Ge, whose nephew and brother-in-law were among the missing, told AFP outside the gates of the mine.

"They know all along that there were safety problems but they wouldn't do anything about it." A dozen other relatives of those missing hung around the mine gates in temperatures near 15 degrees below zero Celsius, some crying or sobbing, and others refusing to speak with journalists.

Ambulances were seen rushing out of the mine gates.

"We just had a meeting. The rescue work is going on," a mine official refused to identify himself, other than as senior worker, told AFP.

"They said that some 70 miners have been rescued," China News Service said, whose teams of 300 people were involved in the search for those still trapped.

Investigators said the accident was caused by a coal-dust explosion, which knocked out all the ventilation systems in the pit, according to Xinhua.

A coal-dust explosion is often caused when there is a gas blast, which ignites the world dust suspended in the air or sends on walls, Professor Xia Junliang from the China Coal Research Institute told AFP.

Senior officials of the communist party's Central Committee and State Council (cabinet) ordered rescuers save the trapped miners "at all cost", Xinhua said.

It said the Beijing-based provincial government had ordered safety checks on all mines and vowed to close unsafe ones immediately.

Beilongjiang Longmei Group, a mining conglomerate of four major state-owned coal businesses with a reported capital of 12 billion yuan ($1.6 billion), owns the Dongfeng mine, Xinhua said.

Although many of the accidents in China's coal industry occur in illegal mines, the work safety watchdog said the Dongfeng mine was fully licensed. AFP

Bill Randy "Duke" Cunningham cries while reading a statement outside the federal courthouse in San Diego Monday

US legislator pleads guilty to bribery

LOS ANGELES—BILL RANDY CUNNINGHAM, a Republican from San Diego, resigned from Congress on Monday, hours after pleading guilty to taking at least $2.4 million in bribes to help friends and campaign contributors, an indictment maintains.

Cunningham, a highly decorated Navy fighter pilot in Vietnam, tearfully acknowledged his guilt in a statement read outside the federal courthouse in San Diego.

"The truth is, I broke the law, committed unconscionable and disgraceful acts while," the eight-term congressman known for his emotional outbursts and combative conservatism said. "I know that I will forfeiture freedom, my reputation, my world. It possessions and, most importantly the trust of my friends and family."

Cunningham, 63, pleaded guilty to one count of tax evasion and one count of conspiracy to commit bribery, tax evasion, wire fraud and mail fraud. He faces up to 13 years in prison and hundreds of thousands of dollars in fines and forfeitures.

Prosecutors said he received cash, cars, rugs, antiques, furniture, yacht club fees, meeting expenses and vacations from four unnamed co-conspirators in exchange for aid in winning defense contracts. None of the income was reported to the Internal Revenue Service or on the congressman's financial disclosure forms, the government said.

Cunningham, who is known as Duke, lived while in Washington on a 44-foot yacht, named the Duke Ella, owned by Mitchell J. Wade, the founder of MZM Inc., a defense contracting firm that received tens of millions of dollars in federal contracts. Both prosecutors said Cunningham helped steer to one. New York Times

EU states with CIA jails face sanctions

BRUSSELS—EUROPEAN UNION JUSTICE COMMISSIONER Franco Frattini threatened sanctions on Monday for any EU nations found to have secret CIA prison camps in operation on their soil.

"Should the occasions be accurate, I would be forced to draw serious consequences," Frattini told a security conference in Berlin.

He said any EU country found to have harboured one of the reported prison camps could have their voting rights in the Council of Ministers suspended. Frattini said the operation of such camps on EU soil would violate the bloc's rules governing freedom and human rights.

The EU had made contact several days ago with the White House about possible secret CIA activities in Europe, but Washington had "unfortunately not yet given any formal assurance" that the reports were untrue, he said.

The US State Department said Monday it was ready to answer queries "in as complete and forthright a manner as we possibly can" to Secretary-of-State Condoleezza Rice statement a trip to the up next week.

"We have received inquiries concerning these press reports and we're going to do our best to answer these questions in as complete and forthright a manner as we possibly can," State Department spokesperson Sean McCormack said. AFP

RESCUER carries a miner to safety after an explosion at the Donghegou coal

Martin-led Canadian gov't toppled

OTTAWA—CANADIAN PRIME MINISTER Paul Martin's embattled Liberal minority government was ousted by a no-confidence vote late Monday in Parliament, kicking off a likely 6-way election campaign over the Christmas holiday.

Canada's three opposition parties, who had threatened for months to topple the government amid a succession of challenges in the House of Commons over Liberal Party corruption allegations, voted 171 to 133 to force an election.

Voters are likely go to the polls either Jan. 16 or Jan. 23, 2006.

The ten Canadian minority governments were previously defeat by no-confidence votes, but Martin's Liberals were the first ever to fall on a (Con?) alone economy motion.

The motion comes after Martin rejected an opposition ultimatum to promise to dissolve Parliament in January.

He had instead pledged to call an election in March or April, 39 days after the release of a final report on a government-funding scandal involving the previous Liberal government.

But New Democratic Party (NDP) leader Jack Layton withdrew his crucial support for the Liberals soon after the release of a damning preliminary report on the scandal in early November.

The Liberals are accused of rewarding kickbacks from advertising firms awarded millions of dollars in government contracts from 1996 to 2002, during the government of then-prime minister Jean Chrétien, to counter a separatist movement in the French-speaking province of Quebec.

Martin was finance minister at the time, but was exonerated by a judicial inquiry. Still, the scandal cost the Liberals a fourth consecutive minority government last year.

Most seen another another Liberal minority government, including new Conservative leader Stephen Harper, Alberta Premier Ralph Klein and former Prime Minister Joe Clark whose government was the last to be booted out in 1979 and lost a re-election.

But watchers Conservatives lose ground in opinion polls, the last days of Martin's Liberal government have been marked by Liberals of lawmakers and tight threads that has pundits predicting the third victories election campaign in the country's history.

Already, the Liberals have threatened to sue Conservative members of Parliament for "false content" they leaked the party to organized crime, while Liberals are running record finances.

Conservative leader Stephen Harper called the Liberals "a party ruined in a judicial inquiry" and "found guilty of breaking every conceivable law in the province of Quebec with the help of organized crime." Liberal House Leader Tony Valeri shot back, calling the Conservatives "two angry people" who offered "half truths and innuendo" and would reverse decades of progress in Canada "in the name of some right-wing ideology." Both sides predicted worse to come.

Valeri also blasted the Conservatives for collaborating with the separatist Bloc Quebecois to bring down the government while others peddled insults such as "dreamboy" and "anti-immigrant" to describe their opponents.

With majorities maintained on the two appeals in Quebec, a united front out of the Liberal scandal, federalists fear being locked out of the province. AFP

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Toxic Chinese chemical spill flows into Russia

KHABAROVSK, RUSSIA—TOXIC BENZENE that spilled into a river after a blast at a chemical factory in China reached the northern Russian city of Khabarovsk on Tuesday, as Russian officials were weighing whether to shut off public water supplies in the Far East city, officials said Monday.

Analysis carried out since Sunday in a branch of the Amur river west of Khabarovsk showed benzene levels "are slightly above environmental norms," Oleg Mitvol, deputy head of Russia's natural resources management agency, told AFP.

In Moscow, a spokesperson for the same agency, Yevgeny Sergeyev, confirmed that amounts of benzene detected in the river were to be expected the poisoned level and would be expected to rise over the coming three days as the poisoned slick flows on the region.

Asked whether the benzene found was that from the chemical factory in China, Sergeyev said: "That is our preliminary conclusion." He said it was based in part on the fact that there are no chemical factories in Russia upstream from the city of Khabarovsk, which is home to around 600,000 people.

The contamination could potentially affect more than one million people in more than 70 outlying towns and villages in the Khabarovsk region, but President Vladimir Putin's spokesman to the Russian Far East, Kamil Iskhakov, has been assuring residents there was no need for panic.

He and other officials have said the area has received plentiful stocks of clean water to substitute, or contain, that would be distributed for free if needed and have promised to prevent any price-gouging or hoarding.

A spokesperson for the ministry for emergency situations said a cargo plane carrying 20 tons of charcoal for use in water purification was dispatched from Moscow to Khabarovsk. AFP

WORLDBRIEFS

China bird flu outbreaks

BEIJING—China has confirmed two more outbreaks of the deadly H5N1 strain of bird flu in poultry in the Jiangsu province of Nanjing and in central Hunan province. China has culled more than 20 million birds this year to contain the spread of avian influenza and has reported 14 outbreaks since mid-October in seven regions and provinces from the far southwest to the frigid northeast. Three people have been confirmed to have had with the H5N1 strain flu virus. Six of others have died. The Ministry of Agriculture said on the Web site that 200 birds that died last week in Shandong country to Nanjing and 420 poultry that died in Yongzhou earlier this month were confirmed to have H5N1. The two provinces had earlier outbreaks of birds. Reuters

1,000th US execution

WASHINGTON—The United States is scheduled this week to witness its 1,000th execution since the Supreme Court reinstated the death penalty in 1976. But none of it touches this milestone represents cruel and capital punishment only for killing out of hate. Some 885 people have executed by death since the Supreme Court ended a 10-year moratorium on capital punishment that was from 1967-1977. With five people scheduled for execution in five different states this week. It seems almost certain that the landmark of 1,000 will be past and "This is a time for sombre and sober reflection," but the United States is already far ahead. Even this death penalty, " said David Elliot of the Justice of Conference abolish the Death Penalty. Reuters

Saddam trial resumes

BAGHDAD—A defiant Saddam Hussein on Monday welcomed angry words with the presiding judge and heard testimony from the first of two soldiers witness as the Mid-Of the former Iraqi dictator resumed after a 10-day break. After barely two hours in session, the court was adjourned to Dec. 4 to give time for one of Saddam's seven co-defendants to appear for two witnesses they're Dhiyab al-Ajeel al-Nashmi and will be called to testify. Saddam had readily folded into the hearing and Saddam engaged in an angry opening skirmish with judge Rizkar Mohammed Amin over his treatment at the high security Baghdad court. Amin, sat up in the former headquarters of Saddam's Baath party 14 complained he had been forced to walk the court into the courthouse as the 68 year-leaders and had been seen in handcuffs on the way to the court, nodding briefly for him to carry a copy of the Koran. AFP

INQUIRER

OPINION

Hello!?

IF YESTERDAY WE LISTED THE OBSTACLES IN THE way of finally hearing Virgilio Garcillano's version of events, today we must consider the difficulties the man himself has put forward. Foremost of the problems is the man's refusal to see himself as subject to an accounting before the people. Instead, he considers himself the victim of persecution, and of possible liquidation.

EDITORIAL

Garcillano is not the victim. The public is. Garcillano can provide the answers; indeed, he must see he owns the country an explanation. The public cannot answer things for him, or be expected to view him with sympathy. Garcillano is the one with a lot of explaining to do, not Congress and not the Filipino people.

Garcillano is to the same position as someone accused of conspiracy to defraud the public who turns on his accusers and says he would testify only if the following conditions are met. First, that he no longer be considered a suspect. Second, that he should not be subjected to arrest or investigation, much less a trial. Third, that not being a suspect, and being freed from all liability for the fraud he was originally accused of, the fraud itself should be declared to have never taken place. There—and only then, he says—will he answer questions.

But testify on what? Never mind the gall of a suspect demanding that he become a resource person for his accusers, he would make any investigation, or inquiry, an exercise in futility.

By all means, Garcillano is entitled not only to assert his innocence. But to use every forum to prove it. The operative word here, though, is "prove." The burden of proof is thinly or not on Garcillano. In the eyes of not just the law, but common sense, he already suspected his own defense by fleeing. Now he cannot forward, innocuously enough, saying that his flight was made necessary because he learned both the administration and the opposition. It may be that his first instinct was to seek sanctuary by submitting himself to the custody of the clergy. It may be that his first option was thwarted precisely by the administration (or the opposition) engaged in a standoff. It may be that "preventive custody" made it impossible to speak out until now.

Even if the worst is so, it underlines the need for him to offer testimony while only one, absolute guarantee that all his physical safety. And if that is, indeed, his strategy—to obtain as many concessions as possible, prior to submitting to questioning—those concessions must be limited to the quality and the truthfulness of his testimony. After all, since he has spoiled the issue, he becomes much less useful to any interested party. When the full story of his long odyssey of evading public scrutiny is written, perhaps the most remarkable aspect of Garcillano's life and career will be his having survived this long.

He cannot play these things out by continuing to bargain. A major concession seems to be in the works, with at least two chairpersons of the Five House committees investigating the "Hello, Garci" tapes saying they will move to withdraw the issuance of arrest, so long as he testifies. Under the law only the least culpable party in a crime can offer to turn state witness. The worst for best, depending on partisan affiliations) case scenario is that the mastermind was President Macapagal-Arroyo and Garcillano was merely an accessory. Then again, a much larger conspiracy crossing party lines might just be revealed or, why not, if only for the sake of argument, that nothing happened at all.

This last and most remote possibility however, must be proven. In contrast, as lawyers put it, he stipulated as an agreed-upon conclusion prior to on-stand hearing. The facts, such as they might be revealed, must point to a conclusion. We cannot have a conclusion first, and have facts selected and edited to prove it.

At the beginning of this crisis, we urged Mr Arroyo to fire up to her own rhetoric about letting "the chips fall where they may." She did not do it. Will Garcillano do what she has not done? There is a large body of admittedly circumstantial evidence—some of them of his own doing—indicating he was up to no good during the last elections. He has to speak up without neutral intervention or equivocation. There is no other way that to list all his contradictions and recollections of events only make people say to frustration, "Hello!?"

Puno is most senior justice

WEATHER FORECAST: MORE FLUTTER. Ex-Election Commissioner Virgilio Garcillano testifies at the congressional hearings, there will be plenty of lightning and thunder. At last, senators Dan Sotto pro-administration congressmen should keep a safe distance from Garcillano since he is fighting enemies in his committee victory while he's testifying.

Enrile and his friends are already trying to make fools of the Filipino people. He said he agreed with the Philippine envoy to Singapore for official records showing that he visited the city-state on July 14, 2003 and then left for Penang a few days later. Who are we going to believe, Garcillano the Singaporean government?

Enrile must desire be called to the floor to clear, that the issue has already submitted calling to him on the phone and to her apologized for a on television. Who are we going to believe, Garcillano Jay Enrile?

He said he is not "accepting that there was such 'extrajudicial execution'" between him and Art Aliac, but he also demanded that the report not be used as evidence against him because he is the victim. How small to which, was his conversation supposed to be?

Mr. Archangelo Zuno, a senators in the morning, is right. He and Garci should be subpoenaed to a far hearing so he could see evidence against him. At last, all witnesses should be assigned to the detention. Because it seems that living is no assurance of safety in this administration.

* * *

Three Filipinos were wanted still when it was reported last week that Sen. Miriam Defensor Santiago was being nominated for the position of chief justice of the Supreme Court. Fortunately the deadline for the submission by the Judicial and Bar Council of the list of nominees to the President has lapsed and it would down a proposal to extend the deadline. Although many members have been appointed associate justices for less, too many), this is the first time an outsider was going to be appointed chief justice.

That that nightmare materialized, it would have been one more big blow to the Supreme Court, already hurt by several controversies, among them the questionable decision that President Joseph Estrada had resigned and that Gloria Arroyo was rightfully appointed by the people. Now, another controversy is coming.

It is a Court tradition that the most senior justice succeeds as chief justice. This section, no rule has been violated only twice. First, during the Japanese Occupation, and then, during martial law.

Being chief justice is the Holy Grail of justices. Judges and lawyers. In fact, just being associate justice is the ambition of judges and lawyers. It is what keeps them on the straight and narrow. Had Milton Aaaa appointed chief justice, some of the present associate justices could have made it to the top post. All of them would reach the compulsory retirement age before Milton does, and she would probably have the longest reign. Hence, it would have disappointed, discouraged and disillusioned [one] court judges and lawyers aspiring for a seat in the Supreme Court. And you know what happens to the disillusioned set of justice when judges suffer low morale.

Right now, the most senior associate justice, both in the tribunal and in the judiciary, is Justice Reynato Puno. He was from the order and during his 30 years of government service, he has served as a cabinet secretary, plenipotentiary official. He was first appointed acting city judge of Quezon City in 1972, at the age of 32, was through the Office of the Solicitor General to the Court of Appeals and to the Ministry of Justice as deputy. He was appointed to the Supreme Court in 1995 at the age of 50. He distinguished himself as associate justice with his erudite ponencias and a keen sense of the most respected justices.

Next in line in seniority are Associate Justices Panganiban and Norberto Quisumbing who were appointed in 1995 and 1996, respectively.

* * *

Here is some good news: if his alphanumerical company, United Laboratories, will manufacture the cure for the syndrome Tourette, the man who has the misfortune to suffer the disease and do cure it to the government on condition that it would be given free, no cost, to those who need it. The sick find the medicine is manufactured by Roche, a multinational company, for a capital product enough to cause most Filipinos to faint. Many would rather die of epilepsy than be made the beneficiary of the charity of an arch Republican.

It was found out that Roche has no patent for the medicine in the Philippines, so Unilab and other Filipino pharmaceutical companies are free to manufacture it. The problem is that the raw material comes from a plant that grows only in mainland China. Unilab is having its raw material from India, which buys it from China. Unilab will not even grow the plant in the Cordilleras, because it is a Chinese import. Chinese, and to the people there will grow that plant instead of marijuana. Unilab fears other drug companies will do the same so that we will be amply supplied with the medicine if and when we find the cure here.

In fact, several Filipino drug firms can follow the example of Unilab, which is producing generic versions of medicines sold by multinationals at exorbitant prices. The Philippines has one of the highest costs of medicines in the world. But Unilab tells us: prices overseas have to match its 50 to 70 percent less.

There are many expensive, imported medicines that are already off-patent but the multinationals are still selling them at high prices. Filipino drug firms can produce them cheaper to give Filipino patients a break.

Liar, liar

MONTHS AGO, THE SITUATION WAS THIS:

A husband finds his wife in bed with another man. He is furious and wants his ear of his life. But she defends herself by saying it is not what he thinks.

How did she inform get in he in the same room with her? Well, she said, anyway, he was passed to pass by the neighborhood and she greeted him. They were walking but the neighbor being fatigued is passing, she invited him in so pause her temporarily. How did she get in the bedroom? Well, she said, she was tired and she decided to take off her clothes and then she went to bed. Before she knew and put her some second later to keep her room. Whatever all the meaning and meaning for it the husband, then? Well, it was a dark and windy night, he was probably hearing the John of Nights.

When the husband went to the interlopers to interrogate him, he found that he has vanished. His determined search for the fellow in the yard yielded nothing. But the wife and neighbors being the offender of the neighborhood, he is certain they helped the fellow escape. Meanwhile he vale gets bolder and assertive him, demanding to know how he got to her house and why he was naked. He says he simply, but why him. She answers angrily that that naive neighbor had been trying to get her to go to bed with him for some time now. Now he would possibly have betrayed their neighbor to a husband who is a well-known bodybuilder.

Today the situation has risen added developments:

The paramour friend appears, and says he never disappeared to begin with. He has just been in the neighborhood all the time. If the neighbors would see on him, or if the respectable members of another community notice they saw him hanging in their premises, that is their problem, not his. As to his having been in bed with the man's wife, they never

As I See It

Neal H. Cruz

There's the Rub

Conrado de Quiros

If truth hurts, lies hurt even more

FOR A WHILE, I BELIEVE ONE OF THE THRILLS of Filipinos afflicted by the political circus is that you made everything in order. I became allergic to that epithet. There were invitations to join rallies, protests, mass actions and the like, but I couldn't bear to join any of them simply because I did not know what (rationally) to do.

Then I began to notice that I was not alone in my nervous acute numbness. In forums and fiascos about the outcome of an election here supposedly is the country, almost all the interviewees agreed that the hard numbers on what has been happening in the country almost all the interviewees agreed that the hard numbers on what has been happening in the country almost all the interviewees agreed that the hard numbers on what has been happening in the country

A subject that has no place in the academe

IT IS SAD TO RECENT HON THE norms of ethics and morality have rarely declined to our society, and saddest still that the academe is where this downward has become most prevalent, undermining the redress of academic excellence.

The University of the Philippines is the country's prominent state university, the bastion of academic excellence in the country. We what goes on to the academe betrays its very expression.

More than financially horrible and radiant student activists, the university's greatest threat is perhaps the lack of moral doorstep and ethical standards in the subjects it offers. This is worse as it directly undermines academic endeavor by allowing vulgarity and frivolity to insidiously with high-standard learning.

For instance, what could one learn from a subject on gender and sexuality (which is under the course title Social Science 3), where a certain professor is a guest instructor or whose sensitive issues on sex and human sexuality are discussed without the least consideration on human refinement, sensitivity and respect?

More than being a great insult to the Muslim ng Jejeim, who set the country's image of the crop, this mirrors the urgency to reevaluate the curriculum of the university lest it loses grip on its responsibility in molding the country's future leaders.

The academe should clearly exercise what it teaches its students and make sure it imparts quality education that both the intellect of the country's best minds, not instructors that are feminist and trivial or that do not observe a single standard in a reputable institution of higher learning.

—ANDREW D. MENDOZA JR.,
BS Molecular Biology
and Biochemistry, College of Science,
University of the Philippines,
Diliman, Quezon City

LETTERS

SSS program meant to protect pensioners

THIS IS IN REFERENCE TO THE LETTER OF Sergio Montinola, JPDI, 11/15/05) the complained having sent six letters to the Social Security System president, to which he still has to receive a reply.

The statement is inaccurate. On Oct. 7, the SSS sent Montinola a letter informing him that his monthly pension will be suspended starting September this year due to noncompliance with the Annual Confirmation of Pensioners (ACOP) requirements. We also faxed the letter to Montinola's residence on the same day.

On Oct. 20, our Member Relations Department (MRD) wrote another letter, which included a Pensioners Reply Form, elaborating on the reasons for the suspension of his monthly pension and advising him to accomplish the Pensioners Reply Form for submission to the nearest SSS office so as to facilitate the reinstatement of his pension.

On Oct. 25, MRD manager Eugenia de la Cruz also explained to him, over the phone, the rationale of the ACOP program. We faxed another copy of the Pensioner's Reply Form to Montinola's residence on the same date.

Montinola's pension will resume after he complies with the ACOP requirements. It normally takes two months before pensions are restored.

The ACOP program, which was started early last year, is part of reforms intended to ensure that pensioners get the right benefits and the SSS can recover the money erroneously sent to those who have died, remarried or recovered from their disabilities.

If a pensioner is unable to go to an SSS branch for checking, he or she can request for a home visit by an SSS representative. Pensioners can also communicate with the SSS by responding to an invoice, or by sending a certification that they are alive and eligible to receive pension. The certification may be issued by a regular SSS employee who has been working in the SSS for at least five years or a teller in the bank where they have an account. The SSS may accept confirmation from the postman or barangay chair.

The SSS sent a notice via registered mail to Montinola on Dec. 1, 2004. We have no record that the mail was returned to the SSS. We were advised in reports in the nearest SSS office for interview and checking in February 2005, which was the month of his retirement.

Please note that all SSS branches have special lanes for pensioners undergoing ACOP. The SSS has also designated specific dates for them to report to the ACOP so that they would be spared from any inconvenience.

We are saddened by the refusal of Montinola to undergo interview and medical checkup since this would delay the resumption of his monthly pension. We hope he would see the benefits of the program, which is aimed at purging from the SSS list of pensioners, those who have died, remarried or recovered from their disabilities.

—JOEL VILLANUEVA,
assistant vice president,
Media Affairs Department,
Social Security System,
East Avenue, Diliman, Quezon City

Bird flu threat, how serious is it?

DISCLAIMER OR TRAVEL IS NOT A VACcine, as referred to in the Inquirer editorial "Strong ducks." (PDI, 11/15/05) It is an antiviral drug. The same mistake was made in a news item on a possible Philippine dungeon cooperative undertaking for the production of the drug in the Philippines. (PDI, 11/13/05)

Perhaps, the media should also check the answer for information journals from political analyst William Esplaid on suspected Pentagon involvement in what seems to be a media hype on the possibility of a bird flu pandemic breaking out.

The manufacturer obtained the patent for the production of Tamiflu from a Californian based firm which reportedly enjoys a 10 percent royalty on all Tamiflu sales.

The public should know that substantial danger of a pandemic would be around the corner only if and when the bird flu virus mutates into a form that is easily transmissible from human to human.

This has not happened yet, though the virus has now been around for a good number of years, and there are literally billions of bird keepers all over Asia. As the head of the Infectious Diseases department at Centre Hospitalier Universitaire emphasized: the most reasonable expectation is that the status quo will not for the foreseeable future. If the virus does mutate into this easily transmissible form, it could possibly be far less virulent. These things need to be totally unpredictable.

We do not mean that governments should not be vigilant. It does mean, however, that the media should pay attention to all virus carriers but people go to abattoirs unnecessarily.

—ABE ARAYA,
arjay2610@operamail.com.au

INQUIRER Northern Luzon
Editor Jun Bautista
Bureau Chief Rolando B. Fernandez

Children learn to protect rare turtles

By Allen Macarubo
Morong, Bataan

CHILDREN FROM A SMALL village in the coastal town of Morong in Bataan are looking forward to the next 25 to 30 years when sea spoilers or poachers will return to the place where they are hatched to lay their eggs.

When they released some 30 baby Olive Ridley turtles (Lepidochelys olivacea) to the sea on Saturday, they knew that they saved these endangered marine animals from poachers and commercialization.

At 10, Alyssa Llenarse knows very well the ecological importance of sea turtles. Asked when he would like to see someday, he would answer, "in presence of turtles."

The young generation of conservation advocates in Barangay Sisiglahan-ng in Morong is gradually learning to protect the three-feet (1-meter), che-mellow in the world.

"Their motivation comes from their parents, who used to be turtle eggs collectors and poachers but are now volunteers for the Bantay Pawikan Inc., a group of local fishermen and farmers protecting and conserving endangered sea turtles.

Every year, the nesting grounds where the helpless turtles suffer exploitation from starving communities. Until, at least, this season in Sisiglahan-ng a nearby turtle a thing of the past," said Wendell Arenas, project officer of the community-based Pawikan Conservation Project in Bataan.

Sisiglahan-ng host the biggest nesting beach of Olive Ridleys in Bataan.

The support of the residents for the conservation program has been growing since 1999 when Bantay Pawikan was established by an empowered community devoted to protecting the turtles.

Manolo Rizo, 53, used to hunt turtles and collect eggs for food 10 years ago. In some instances, he would sell it to turtle meat and eggs in the market.

"People here love to eat turtle meat although it is being sold at very high prices. It's considered a delicacy," Rizo said. "The profit is good for just selling the eggs and the meat."

Conservation advocate

Rizo is now a turtle conservation advocate and clears Brgy. Sisiglahan-ng Hi-ya-ng Hi-ya-ng Hi-ya-ng of "poachers." Villagers who joined the seminars to protect the threatened creatures.

Bantay Pawikan with Bataan wildlife advocates attend meetings with a group of volunteers organized by the Philippine Bread Recovery Movement (PRRM) in the province.

The PRRM persuaded the community to come together and organize Asian sea turtles. "Our overfishing problem of poverty and degradation of marine resources is the primary focus of the assembling," he said.

Rizo, together with other volunteers, would walk the beach—a distance of more than 10 km—every night during the nesting grounds of the turtle and recollect their eggs for the hatcheries.

"I have a plan to buy that kind of work. I have my wife encouraged to start this endangered species from extinction," he said.

Rizo said organizing people from a poor town and convincing them to stop an illegal activity seems crazy, but, despite fishing and poaching, had been his primary source of livelihood, he said.

But the reformed poachers are slowly learning an alternative course of development with the help of the community-based project, he said.

"As the days go by, I see conservation competing with basic needs of man. Many of the best explanation and legal consequences could stop them from collecting turtle eggs for a stronger income to buy food, send kids to school, and pay debts," Rizo said.

The conservation project now leads to realistic possibilities for Sisiglahan-ng and the world's marine environment.

It is being funded by the United Nations Development Program-Global Environment Facility under its Small Grants Program (UNDP-GEF-SGP), Arenas said.

The protected government has provided a small capital for the project's livelihood program. Other groups, such as the Bataan Foundation and the Ocean Heritage Foundation, have also expressed interest in giving assistance.

'Pawikan' festival

As part of efforts to save the threatened sea turtles, a pawikan festival was held on Saturday in Bataan, educating people who are now aware of the importance of protecting the environment.

In the capital city of Balanga, a "Walk for a Cause" was staged to save the turtles, simultaneously with the release of Olive Ridleys in Morong. Since 1999, the Bantay Pawikan has released more than 30,000 hatchlings back to the sea.

"This symbolic contribution to protect this rare marine has turned out very well. It will bring unmistakable development to Bataan in terms of conserving our natural environment," said Gov. Enrique Garcia during a program marking the festival.

Garcia said he saw a lot of potentials in preserving the mangrove and in uniting the people under the conservation program.

Bataan Rep. Albert Garcia said the provincial government had initiated several programs to protect the environment. "We have (through former) our Bataan Expo two months' endorsement to patrol the sea and protect our waters from illegal fishing," he said.

LIKE these boys, a small village in Morong, Bataan, children in Sisiglahan-ng are the reserve of the endangered Olive Ridley turtles.

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Across the NATION

Enrile, Defensor face suit over logging

By TJ Burgonio

SEN. JUAN PONCE ENRILE AND ENVIRONMENT SECRETARY Michael Defensor could face charges in court for their key role in the lifting of the 16-year-old moratorium on logging on Samar Island.

Writer Eastern Samar Gov. Leopoldo Bobis, residents and non-government organizations are seriously considering taking legal action against the two in view of Defensor's order allowing Enrile's firm to log some in Samar.

"I have discussed it [with them], and they said they will take it to [legal action]," Bobis, a lawyer, said after emerging from the Senate's initial inquiry into the possible displacement of indigenous peoples as an offshoot of Defensor's order.

"Ha'h a senator, he's supposed to be a brilliant lawyer. Nobody should be exempted from the application of the law. I have nothing personal about this, and against Senator Enrile," he added.

When asked if charges could also be lodged against Defensor, he said: "I think so."

Enrile-staffed or Enrile-linked woes him and summoned that his firm, San Jose Timber Corp. (SJTC), had a valid permit to log in a 95,779-ha area on the island during [illegible] 1967.

"If they believe in that, let them file whatever action they have," he told reporters.

"I was not really good looking in the eyes of Marcos. They should have filed the case against me already. During the time of Cory, they should have filed the case against me already. During the time of Ramos, even during the time of Estrada. I have been bidding the concession already. I did not get it from the government. It was sold to me and I bought it."

Defensor issued on Aug. 16 an order allowing SJTC to harvest timber on the island and extended its timber license agreement (TLA) by another 16 years, the period it was suspended, upon Enrile's motion.

The firm's TLA covers an area that falls right at the heart of the 333,000-ha Samar Island Natural Park (SINP), home to the only healthy lowland forests on the island.

The SINP is a component of the $122.8-million Samar Island Biodiversity Project funded by the Global Environment Facility, United Nations Development Fund, UN Agency for International Development, the government and NGOs.

At the hearing by the committee on culture communities, chaired by Sen. Juanito Madrigal, Bobis said Enrile could be charged with violating the Anti-Graft and Corrupt Practices Act for "intervening" with the DENR on his firm's behalf.

His intervention, he stressed, came in the form of "obtaining financial, monetary incentive in a franchise, contract or transaction with the government during his term," or, as it is called in "corrupt practices."

The smoking gun, he said, was Enrile's July 13 letter to Defensor "intervening" to lift the moratorium on logging imposed in 1989 by then Environment Secretary Fulgencio Factoran.

SCHOOL PENCE
In some areas of the country, indigenous materials make good alternatives for construction, especially in some schools in Mindanao like this one.

Samar logging foes reject dialogue with Enrile firm

By Blainie S. Rivera

GUARDIANS OF THE SAMAR Island Nature Park yesterday rejected the proposal of Sen. Juan Ponce Enrile's lawyer to hold a dialogue with stakeholders on the island on the controversial logging concession given to Enrile's firm.

The Samar Island Biodiversity Foundation and community leaders in Samar, a globally important biodiversity site, were standing firm on their position against commercial logging within the protected area.

"Logging is an emotional issue to us. ... Our position is to reversal the DENR order, and we will continue with that position. It's nonnegotiable," SIBF president Fr. Oscar Aceñas told the Inquirer by phone yesterday.

Religious leaders in Samar and Leyte, however, have ejected their doors to Environment Secretary Michael Defensor, who will fly to Leyte on Friday to explain the Department of Environment and Natural Resources' position on Enrile's logging concession.

Defensor will meet with the four bishops of Samar and the three bishops of Leyte, led by the chancery of the Archdiocese of Palo, to air the issues of Palo Archbishop Pedro Dean, Aceñas said.

He said it was the DENR chief who called for a meeting with the bishops after all Samar bishops issued pastoral letters calling on the people to help preserve the SINP and block the resumption of logging activities.

Defensor signed on Aug. 16 an order allowing San Jose Timber Corp to continue in a 95,779-ha area within the SINP. He also extended the firm's timber agreement by another 16 years.

Aceñas said the bishops would present three requests to Defensor. He rejected the idea to reconsider the passage of the original SINP bill without removing 25,000 ha for harvesting existing replantations, and to declare Samar as a zone of peace and development.

Group urges Moro rebs, gov't to rush peace pact

COTABATO CITY—A MORO PEOPLE'S group in Mindanao has urged government and Moro Islamic Liberation Front (MILF) peace negotiators to fast-track the signing of a peace agreement.

The group also asked Philippine Airlines Mindanao Airways, as well as the Central Committee of the MILF to come into an agreement for the sake of the Bangsamoro people and the peace-loving citizens of Mindanao.

In a statement, Suara Muslimin, Mindanao Commission on Women (MCW) vice-chair, said women and children caught in the armed conflict between the military and the MILF have suffered a lot, and that future generations should be spared from what they are experiencing today.

"Most of our member organizations have recommended the speedy resolution of the Mindanao conflict. They are asking both the government and MILF peace panels to reach an agreement that will make Mindanao a land of peace and progression where to live in," said MCW chair Irene Santiago.

Santiago said that in times of armed confrontations, women and children are usually the most vulnerable victims.

Recently, members of the Muslim League of the Philippines said the ongoing military operations in Mindanao against Abu Sayyaf bandits, kidnappers and Moro Islamic Liberation Front renegades have displaced at least 2,000 families in the Autonomous Region in Muslim Mindanao (ARMM).

The group says the number could increase, saying there are several unreported cases wherein the orphaned child would take it upon himself to get back at his family's murderers.

In a statement, Ulama League of the Philippines director Aleem Ilias Macarandas said the orphaned children came from the provinces of Maguindanao, Sulu, Basilan and Zamboanga.

ARMM covers the provinces of Maguindanao, Lanao del Sur, Sulu, Basilan, Tawi-tawi and Marawi City.

Macarandas said a big number of children were displaced at the height of the 2000 all-out-war declaration of then President Joseph Estrada against the MILF.

"The prevailing sentiment among Muslims to keep quiet on children who have been orphaned is the main reason for the large number of unreported cases as they want to exact revenge on the people responsible for the death of their parents or family member," Macarandas said. —Joel Pablo Salud, *PDI Mindanao Bureau*

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Prizes or entries

PHILIPPINE DAILY INQUIRER

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Comfort women suspect Japan aid just a 'ploy'

By Tonnie Ovejas
PEN Central Luzon Desk

CITY OF SAN FERNANDO—THE plan by the Japanese government to support humanitarian projects for the elderly in the Philippines was "another ploy to evade its legal responsibility" to comfort women or victims of military sexual slavery during World War II, former beauty queen-turned activist Rolin Gonzales said on Monday.

Rolin Gonzales, national coordinator of the Lolas Kumportable Internet Group, said the Arroyo administration's decision to distribute the P500 million grant through the privately-funded Asian Women's Fund (AWF) implemented with the justice and social welfare departments since 1997, the purported issue hurdled by the Japanese Embassy last week, is unsuccessful.

In a statement, the embassy said the AWF has helped Tokyo "extend atonement and support" to the aging victims. Terry identified some 169 women yet were entitled to aid from the AWF and 1.2 million yen is credited and settles support from the Japanese government, the embassy reported.

When reached by separate telephone interview, Gonzales said she personally identified all the women that have come out in the Philippines" media circles).

The charity money, she noted, was accepted by some survivors but was rejected by many who instead demanded legal compensation and formal apology.

Many victims in Luzon and Visayas, where the so-called "comfort women or "lapat-sudo" were the adopted, have rejected the charity money.

The groups of comfort women—the Lila Pilipina, Lolas Kumportable and Malaya Lolas—have documented more than 180 cases from 1992 to 2004. Not one was included in the organization representative, Gonzales said.

Quoting the plan, she added: "The donors of the Japanese government help the Filipino comfort women directly by providing them legal compensation? Why direct the assistance to the other elders Filipinos instead of the victims themselves?"

Japanese military sexual slavery for decent sexual violence, trauma, damaged lives and psyches, she said, crimps the results of a study.

"Suppression of traumatic reactions victimization is related to long-term health problems such as abuse, hypertension, and allergies," the study found out.

Filipino Lolas also continue to suffer from post-traumatic stress disorder.

Japan, Jacobs said, acknowledged the problem, if not the true crime, after the discovery by Yoshiaki Yoshimi, a history professor at Chuo University in Tokyo, of documents in Japan's Defense Agency.

ROUNDUP

Rubber pushed

SUBIC CITY—Over 500 manufacturers of the Philippine rubber industry moved up a Tuesday conference here Thursday urging the government to put more assistance to the crop. The conference is expected to help the 500 rubber manufacturers, tire-makers of which has not been fully taken advantage of, according to Dr. Eugenio Miada Philippine representatives to the International Rubber Research and Development Board. Miada, director emeritus of the University of Southeastern Philippines in Davao City, said the package has ways to encourage to rubber research development. Demand for rubber is expected to rise in the coming years.

Ryan Rosario, PIR Mindanao Bureau

Bicol roadshow

LEGAZPI CITY—About 100 Bicol businessmen are expected to join a road show on investment promotion to be conducted by the Board of Investments and the Department of Trade and Industry on Dec. 10 at the Casablanca Industrial Park, 171 Rizal Boulevard, Jovelyn Blanco said the road show, which aims to get more businessmen to invest in the region, will seek the endorsement of Bicol's coal project which is the priority project by the BOI. The project will involve investments in agriculture and fishery, tour and entertaining, hotel, marine transportation, manufacturing, petroleum, power, public infrastructure, and/or utilities and telecommunications, technology, shipbuilding.

Jose Rodriguez, PIR Southern Luzon Bureau

2 kids drown

BAGAC, Bataan—Two children drowned to death in separate incidents here on Saturday. Police identified the fatalities as Rayan Gonzales, 8, and her cousin John Paul Gonzales, 7. Both died before reaching the Bagac Rhodium Hospital. Regalado Mercado of the Bataan news bureau reported. He identified the children's mothers as Rosalina Gonzales and Rosalinda Gonzales. Police officials said there is no case filed in connection with the incident.

Diego Retractor, PIR Central Luzon Desk

Santa in Damaguete

DUMAGUETE CITY—The provincial government here was specialized to play Santa Claus this early to the more than 1,500 employees by announcing the release of their anniversary bonus next month.

Governor Emilio Macias II, the provincial human resource officer, said some 1,542 will receive P5,000 each in anniversary bonuses in December. She said only those who have rendered at least 1 year of service during the period 1,700 employees of the province. Valencia said the provincial government also has money for an extra Christmas outright P.4 billion being realized to extract them to government employees.

Jimmy Amarante, PIR Visayas Bureau

Other 'jueteng' forms feared

RUBEN PRINCIPE, City Mayor Edward Hagedorn, head of the government's Anti-Jueteng Task Force yesterday expressed alarm over the rise of "circular jueteng cells" by jueteng operators to pursue their illegal numbers racket in violation series in Luzon.

Hagedorn, in separate statement, said some local government units like a barangay in Baguio even had the authority to pass a barangay resolution authorizing the conduct of "bingo lottery" to deal with legality a patently illegal numbers game operation.

"I'm bringing to the attention of officials in Baguio have apparently resorted to "creativity" on a socially acceptable game like bingo to provide a legal basis to refuse to comply with the call for the collection of bets for jueteng in the area, Hagedorn said.

However, Hagedorn said such "creative interpretation" of the law is unjustified because barangay officials in Baguio have been immediately assigned out by the Philippine National Police on orders issued by PNP Chief Gen. Avelino Lumibao.

Jueteng operations also rake on and are the $22 billion being conducted by the Philippine Charity Sweepstakes Office (PCSO). Jueteng collectors are $22 in a fixed to evening times in some areas in Luzon, Hagedorn said.

"This is what I fear wanted of and denied once at the start of the anti-jueteng campaign," Hagedorn said.

"Lest as we succeed in weakening and paralyzing organized, syndicate-run Jueteng — the unseen protectors must be lifted up by government and in it must address the livelihood and basic needs of thousands of displaced jueteng employees," he said.

Nene: It's a dead law, it's time to kill it

By Juliet Labog-Javellana and Edson C. Tavico Jr.

IT HAS BECOME A DEAD LAW and it's time to repeal it, Senate Minority Leader Aquilino Pimentel Jr. said yesterday after President Macapagal-Arroyo reportedly pledged to Spain that she would not execute a Spanish-Filipino convicted of the rape and killing of two minors.

Amid Hermosol's call for the abolition of the law on capital punishment, the distressed mother of the murdered Ciborg sisters appealed to Ms Arroyo in a letter not to **invoke under foreign pressure** and to uphold Philippine law.

"Being a mother yourself, I have no doubt that you can understand the grief and sorrow of a mother who has her two exceptionally wonderful and God-fearing daughters," Thelma Ciborg said in her letter.

The two victims were sisters Jacqueline, 23, and Marilyn, 20.

The bayanes obtained a copy of Mrs. Ciborg's letter from the Witnesses Against Crime and Corruption (WACC), one of the groups in favor of the death penalty.

Philippine sovereignty

"I am deeply pained by these reports. I have practically dedicated my entire life to seeing to it that those who are guilty would face the death penalty for the crime they have committed," Ciborg said in her letter.

"It undo the entire judicial process because of undue pressure exerted by other countries, which constitute an unwarranted encroachment on our sovereignty as a nation, would be highly prejudicial not only to our family, but more particularly to the entire justice system of this country," she said.

Ciborg told the bayanes she was beginning to question the justice system in the country.

"We fought hard just to get justice for my daughters," she said.

6 years on death row

The Spanish newspaper El Pais, in a report posted on its website, said Ms Arroyo told Spanish Foreign Minister Jose Moss during his visit to Manila last week that the death penalty imposed on the Spanish-Filipino would not be carried out "while she is President."

Along with the Spanish-Filipino convicts Francisco Juan Eleazar Larrañaga, five other people, including another son of a wealthy Cebu clan, were condemned to die by lethal injection.

Larrañaga, now 28, has been on death row for six years, along with the others.

Pimentel, author of a Senate bill seeking the abolition of capital punishment, said Ms Arroyo's position was a virtual admission that the death penalty was not an effective deterrent to crime.

Idle death chamber

"If the government does not want to implement the death penalty law, having realized it is inherently wrong, then the only logical course of action is to have it repealed," he said.

Ms Arroyo's refusal to implement the death penalty also reflects badly on her because she is mandated to enforce the laws, Pimentel said.

"But by repealing the death penalty law, there will be no more criticisms that the President is reneging on her responsibility to implement the laws," he said.

"And we still are on road to an abnormal and oblivious situation wherein the criminal offenders are slapped with the death sentence, death convicts continue to swell our prisons, but the lethal injection chamber remains idle."

NOTICE TO THE PUBLIC:
LAUNDRY
The SAFEST PLACE for your CLOTHES on EARTH.
We DO NOT MIX your CLOTHES with OTHERS.

Court finds cop guilty of journalist's murder

from page A1

judge," said Dismaya, who was wearing a black shirt pinned with the words "Justice for Edgar Damalerio."

"I am satisfied because God heard my prayers. What I have been praying for is for Him to give justice to Edgar's death, and it came," she said.

"It was a victory for press freedom," said Jose Torres Jr., chair of the National Union of Journalists of the Philippines' Committee for the Protection of Journalists.

But Torres pointed out that the conviction of the cops was "only a small victory" when viewed against the continuing harassment and killing of journalists the past two years.

He also noted that the court had failed to unmask the mastermind of Damalerio's murder.

"We are happy for the Damalerio family, although we know that Ossiana and her children would have wanted more," Torres said, adding:

"We can jail all the killers, but until those behind the killings are unmasked and punished for their crimes, press freedom in this country will continue to be threatened."

DOA

Damalerio was the managing editor of the Mindanao Scribe and a commentator of dxGP radio in Tagudin City when he was killed on May 13, 2002. He was shot in the chest and died on the way to a hospital. He was 32.

Pinpilla, the killer, was arraigned in Tagudin City where

RP bags 16 golds, pads medal lead

From page A1

Pearce Gilbert Medina and Jamal Yusa Hamsa also hit nine targets in men's skiff and women's 4x6 events, breaking the Philippines' gold haul to 16 in the 3-0 the Games and 41 overall. They're so far a three-day total of 17 silver and 2 bronzes.

Vietnam was a distant second with a 17-7-2 tally followed by Thailand at 13-9-10 and Malaysia 13-11-12.

In a pair of gripping finals, Medina bested Thai Wanchai Bolkeng 20-15, while Hamsa topped another Thai, Wipas Chaichaowarasin, 10-9, in matches decided on the last shot fired.

Other Filipino winners were bowlers Maria Cecilia Tan over Jessie Ryding, shooter Jeanelie Angeles, wrestlers Jimmy Arapoto and Ronnie Villanueva, karatedo Melvin Pascua, swimmers Miguel Molina, triathlete Eden Gladen Rilla, taekwondo jin Emily Flores also and cyclist Leonardo "Dodong" Andam and Ronnie Alcasid.

Alcasid, the 33-fall triathlon medalist champion, also won his second gold in tandem with Andam by beating Ha Thai, 5-0, for the 15-fall relative double title at the Makati Coliseum.

The 38-year-old Tan, gold medalist in the inaugural of the 1993 world championships, rolled a high 187 on her final game to beat Malaysia's Yasmin Ariffin for the gold in the women's singles with a 10-game series of 1,896 at the Pearl Bowling Center in Pandacan.

Getting the better of two-time champion and compatriot Rosie Candelaria, Ayang clocked 47-10 to easily settle her semifinal match to give athletics its seventh gold. Candelaria earned 47 pts.

The Filipino triathletes are being rewarded by the Thais and the Vietnamese, both of whom also have seven golds to show with two days of track and field action left.

Angeles notched the gold in the 10-m air rifle event of the bowling, followed by Villanueva in the 56-kg.

Only Jr. Arca claimed the featherweight gold at the expense of Laos' Phonkeo Keojaroenkeo in a Referee-Stopped-Contest bout late last night at the Cuneta Astrodome.

Unbeaten Cebu City Bullet delivered by ruling the women's cross country event in 49 minutes and 34.93 seconds, more than 3 minutes clear of fellow Filipina Cecilia Baricuatro at the Ramon Durano Sports Complex in Cebu City.

Welcome present

The 19-year-old Pasuquin, Ilocos Norte native targets to give President Macapagal-Arroyo a welcome present by dedicating the gold to the 57-kg scheduled bouts in the Monday Coliseum.

Pacalso gave his fellow campaigners words during the meeting moments.

Angeles signed compatriots Ariel Sarona, 20-47 to 20-7, to capture the gold in the pistol shooting women's event at the PSC Pistol shooting range in Fort Bonifacio, Taguig City.

The Filipino football management was also elated after they were beaten by the Malaysians, 2-1, last night at the Rizal Sports Complex in Bacolod. The RP Booters hosted out of the medal with a 2-1 record.

Arlene grew full three tackle with 10 goals, including 13 in attempts, up for grabs.

Slated at the Rizal Memorial Stadium are the men's 20-km walk, women's triathlon (heptathlon), men's pole vault, 200m run for men and women, 1500m run, 3000m for men and women, men's triple jump, 4x400m relay for men and women, men's discus throw and women's heptathlon.

The Philippines defeated China in the men's inaugural basketball title with an 11-9 conquest of Indonesia at the Rizal Memorial Stadium.

It was the Filipinos' second straight victory following a 36-0 whitewash of Malaysia in the competition opener on Monday.

ZAIDO Domenico of the Philippines in the air on his way to victory after finishing the 1-meter men's springboard competition last Sunday. EDWIN BACASMAS

Garci left RP disguised ...

From page A1

sales said yesterday.

During a Senate budget hearing, Gonzalez revealed the findings of the committee he had formed to look into the widely publicized "escape" of Garcillano following disclosures of the "Hello Garci" videotape that nearly ousted the administration of President Macapagal-Arroyo over allegations she stole last year's elections.

He said the committee had recommended the filing of perjury charges against the pilot, Capt. Avi Santos, who had testified that Garcillano was not on board his jet, instead he was flown to Cebu on that purported maintenance flight to Singapore.

Gonzalez said that the panel composed of BOC and Bureau of Immigration staff had reported that "there were three passengers—two pilots and one flight engineer and not of the two Garcillano."

Singapore report credible

Gonzalez said the findings of the DFA-BI committee "lend credence to the report of the Singapore Ministry of Foreign Affairs that Garcillano was on board Alpha Air Learjet C-1424 that flew to Singapore on 14 July 2005."

"Thus, the committee believes that out of the three main members of the flight were former Commissioner Garcillano," said Gonzalez, quoting from the panel's report.

Garcillano, left, disappeared from public view following revelations of wiretapped telephone conversations purportedly between him and Mr. Arroyo. He resurfaced on Thursday, giving separate media interviews. He told the Inquirer that he had been in Singapore the whole time reading and writing his memoirs, protected by British Intelligence agents in the region.

Emmanuel Ng, deputy chief of mission of the Singapore Embassy in Manila, said he had no comment on Garcillano's claim that he did not leave the country, contrary to his government's report to the Department of Foreign Affairs.

"We do not take a position on the domestic politics of another country," Ng told the Inquirer.

As Gonzalez was explaining the details of how Garcillano surreptitiously fled the country, Sen. Lito Lapid complained that Gonzalez, senators and congressmen were making a big fuss over Garcillano's supposed departure.

"This is not public lot. The senators and congressmen are looking for him but if he left, what's wrong with that?" he said.

Sen. Pimentel, who allowed Lapid to "interject" his questions during his own interpellations, said his colleague missed the point.

"The point is his (Garcillano's) passport was stamped with the markings 'departed' but there is no record in the Bureau of Immigration. How could that happen?" Lacson said, asking Gonzalez who were involved and who gave the order to allow Garcillano to leave without being recorded properly.

Gonzalez acknowledged that there were administrative lapses in the department but did not put responsibility on the implicated officials.

Gonzalez earlier said he gave more credence to the Singapore government report. Inquirer Star Garcillano to fast left the country would put in question his credibility amid demands in the Senate and House that he testify to resolve questions surrounding the most political scam to engulf Mr. Arroyo's seven-month presidency.

The President has denied any involving last year's elections. In a speech, her supporters allies in the House ripped into an opposition attempt, using the wiretapped to impeach her to charges she rigged the 2004 balloting.

House to lift arrest warrant

In the House of Representatives yesterday, the committee jointly looking into the wiretaps decided after a three-hour meeting to summon Garcillano and Bureau National Bureau of Investigation Deputy Director General Ong to appear at the resumption of its hearings on Dec. 7.

The committee also set aside to lift the arrest warrant against Garcillano should his lawyer, Edgardo Taneadiong, give assurance that Garcillano would show up, said North Cotabato Rep. Emmylou Taliño-Mendoza, the lead prosecutor of the investigation.

The arrest warrant was issued after Garcillano failed to appear before the panel earlier.

She said that if Garcillano did not show up, discussions on the committee report would continue and another panel could pursue the investigation.

Rep. Teodoro Locsin Jr. said that while the executive report was substantially completed, large questions remained unanswered. "Where, how and who made those trips? Were they entirely taken on official business and as part?

"This can only be answered by the people who made it," he said, referring to Ong and Garcillano.

Ong announced on June 10 he had the "most hot of all tapes." He has disappeared since then. His lawyer, Homobono Adaza, has said Ong would appear, possibly before the Senate, if it could guarantee Ong's safety.

Garci conditions

Locsin said the conditions that Garcillano set for his appearance in his media interview on Saturday—that the summon be lifted, that he be treated decently and that the original "Hello Garci" tape be produced—were "actually not that bad."

"We're not going to knock off a willing witness," he added. Locsin said that Garcillano's demand that he be treated decently was already covered by House rules.

"We are not supposed to torture witnesses," Locsin said. "We detail conditions—which is the custody to produce an original tape—is beyond the power of anybody," he said. With reports from Will Dumlao, Jr. Nestel S. Bacuno, Sheila S. Galvezmendez, Christine O. Avendaño, Norman Bordadora, Charlie Perlas and Jeoffrey Maitem, PDI Mindanao Bureau; Rolando Bede-Fuertes, PDI Northern Luzon Bureau; Orville T. Mallari Jr., PDI South-ern Luzon Bureau

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JOB: "Jaguar" de los Santos, who is being linked to a car theft gang, faced reporters after his "voluntary submission" to Interior Secretary Angelo Reyes (right) on Monday. Reyes said De los Santos' lawyer vouched for his allegations against his client

Alleged car thief shows up at DILG

By Norman Bordadora and Luige B. del Puerto

A WEALTHY SUBDIVISION BOY who was implicated in the stolen of car theft cases in Metro Manila volunteered himself yesterday for investigation by Interior Secretary Angelo Reyes who warned him even to the Philippine National Police "for prosecution."

Jose "Jaguar" de los Santos Jr. went to the Department of Interior and Local Government to clear his name of allegations that his brush-it-car theft ring linked to three carjacking suspects who were killed in a shootout in Cebu just last month.

"Desperate[ly] confused, and I have should do the same," Reyes said in the hastily called news conference. De los Santos was accompanied by his father, Dr. Jose delos Santos and their lawyer Rex Francisco.

Voluntary submission, not surrender

"There's no existing case against him. This is just a voluntary submission, not a surrender," Francisco said, adding that all the allegations against his client were "baseless."

Even the PNP Traffic Management Group admitted that they have nothing on the younger De los Santos.

Jaguar's name cropped up in the police's investigation after Patrick Tecson, who was arrested by TMG agents in a buy-bust operation in Quezon City on Nov. 17, said that he was the one who had stolen Diaz to find a buyer for a Nissan Patrol, which later turned out to have been stolen at gunpoint from the driver of PA Beer Inc Villania.

"There were just Tecson's claims. We have not established if this person really exists and whether it is the same person as the Jaguar[-ish] son of a hospital owner in Quezon City," said Supt. Eduardo Ranogon who heads the TMG's special operations group.

The De los Santos family reportedly owned the De los Santos Medical Center in Quezon City.

The TMG's intelligence operatives have also found nothing incriminating on the younger De los Santos. Ranogon, however, said they will "continue to validate" any information about him.

Tests show woman died of meningo

By Jocelyn R. Uy

IT WAS A CASE OF MENINGOcoccemia that was rushed before it could have accumulated, doctors said yesterday.

The 35-year-old woman who died in the Fetus City General Hospital (FCGH) last Wednesday had indeed contracted the killer disease, Dr. Lito Manjuyod, FCGH director, confirmed to the Inquirer over the phone yesterday.

But the final laboratory findings on the victim's blood sample released yesterday showed no signs of the disease.

"The results are negative because she was given antibiotics that hampered the growth of bacteria," Manjuyod explained.

He added that the victim was "clinically confirmed" to have contracted meningo because the showed symptoms of the disease.

Before the victim was admitted to the hospital on Nov. 22, she had been running a fever for days. She was also vomiting, had low blood pressure and developed rashes, the primary symptom of meningo, Manjuyod said earlier.

But he assured the public that the incident should not cause them to panic. "The [disease] was contained."

At the same time, he advised people not to take for granted common cough and colds or a protracted fever.

"They must see their doctor immediately," he said, adding that a regular intake of vitamin-rich food and a good amount of rest would help them fight meningococcemia.

MetroBriefs

Death for drug suspects

TWO [illegible] were sentenced to death yesterday in Manila, Pasig City Regional Trial Court Judge Lorenzo Jacinto Jr. of Branch 264 meted out the death sentence to Chinese nationals Ronald Yee Chua Lo Ho and Rico Lo Ca Lo Ho disappeared after posting bail in 1994. "Their flight indicated their guilt [in the crime committed," the judge said in his 10-page decision. The three were arrested in Pasig City on Nov. 8, 2001 in which a combined law enforcement and Philippine Chinese Confraternity served as buyers. The Philippine Drug Enforcement Agency Special Operations Officer said they seized 600 grams of shabu from the suspects. National Capital Region Criminal Investigation and Detection Group head Supt. Reuben Theodoro said the three could still be operating in Metro Manila. "We are calling on the public to report to the police any information about the whereabouts of these three," he said. Edmar C. Deodoro, Jr.

Mall probes bomb scare

THE SM [illegible] East Coast Metro Centre, Metal has started an internal investigation of the bomb scare that led to the mall's shutdown on Friday afternoon. "They are now checking with us," Centre Police chief Supt. Gilbert Cruz told the Inquirer. Police suspect that the man who left two boxes initially believed to contain bombs at the fourth floor of the mall could be people who have easy access to the building. The boxes were found at about 2 p.m. Friday near an escalator corridor. Bricks dropped into a pail. But after receiving a bomb threat, police found out that the boxes only contained used books left with electric wires. The mall has tightened its security measures thereafter. "We advised the mall officials to improve their security to make sure this will not happen again," Rizal Provincial Police director Senior Supt. Fredie Ramos also said. Jocelyn R. Uy

Oops! False alarm

IT WAS a classic case of a lawyer. Pasay policemen immediately rushed to the main branch of the Philippine National Bank on Roxas Boulevard around noon yesterday after a call from a "concerned citizen," said SPO2 Danny Rosal, a desk officer of the Criminal Investigation Division (CID). However, when the police arrived at the bank, its management, staff and security guards denied the report. PO3 Ronaldo Lucero said the bank's alarm system was being tested at that time and the alleged bank robbers were just there to withdraw their salary. Jocelyn R. Uy

It's Christmas in Manila

THE HOLIDAY season has officially started in the country's capital as city officials unveiled on Monday a giant Christmas tree. The tree, which is 46-feet-high and 15-feet-wide, stands in front of the Manila City Hall. City officials said the lighting of the giant Christmas tree, which has been a yearly tradition since 1998, were to foster a better understanding between Muslims and Christians alike. The tree is adorned with 300 brightly colored pots of silk flowers and about 1,000 [illegible] and incandescent lights. Promoters said the sight of the giant Christmas tree gives them optimism to a more hopeful despite the difficult times. Erica R. Santos

Ear specialists meet on Dec. 2

THE THIRD annual convention of the Philippine Society of Audiology (PSAud) will be held on Dec. 2 at the Manila Philippine Plaza Hotel. Dr. Mogens P. Christensen, PSAud president, said experts from Denmark, Switzerland, Germany, and Australia have been invited to celebrate the conference. Audiology, a relatively new field in the Philippines, is the study of hearing, especially hearing defects and their treatment. The PSAud says there has been a noticeable increase in the number of Filipinos suffering from hearing impairment with one out every one citizens showing the number at about 6.2 million. Nearly 8 million [illegible] out of every 1,000 also suffer from some form of hearing loss. Local experts note that although hearing loss is generally a problem among the elderly, more and more cases have been reported among young adults and children. Hearing loss, especially among children, should be detected by everyone as it can lead to speech disorder, learning disability and psychological disorders. Babies can be tested for possible hearing disorder as early as one to two days after birth. The best time, about PSAud. The PSAud is affiliated with the International Society of Audiology and is a member of the Hearing International.

Tañamor shames Thai foe

By Noah Trinidad

BACOLOD CITY—OLYMPIAN HARRY TAÑAMOR turned and shamed Jaitawa Paesom of Thailand to virtually assure himself of the light flyweight gold medal as the Philippines stayed on brisk bid for quest of the boxing championship in the 23rd Southeast Asian Games here.

The final round, 20-14, in favor of the crispy, sharp-punching Pinoy ring avahanon could have been wider but for the referee allowed the rugged Thai to repeatedly employ dirty tactics in a desperate bid to prevent a rout.

After his victory over Adam, Tañamor, from BP gold medalist in the 2003 Abraham Games, takes on Hermanto Bustar Hutan of Indonesia, who won a four-bout against an undefeated Cambodian with after he was awarded two points for gaining his ankle still down on the floor.

With no months opposition in this after his mastery of the Thai, Tañamor is expected to match double-loss to a second straight SEA Games gold in the boxing finals on Dec. 3.

Loud boy Jose Tipon handily worked out a mean technique on BSU-3 win over Ryan Ilyan (son of Myanmar, 20-5, for the third round and well next) trust Chatsorne of Laos for his next assignment in the bantamweight class.

Tipon, declared the best fighter in this year's Asian Boxing Championship in Vietnam, is headed for a clash against Thai Tangmeg Hongpo as the reigned 56 Thai rivalry for the boxing title continues to hold up.

Three-time Olympian Somsa-Ikla outlasted Nilmidan Tano Silva of Laos, 20-9, in the light welterweight division to make it a perfect day for the Philippines in the boxing field here.

National Open champion Jeanelie Chiloy of Baguio started the BP bid on a bright note to bag 2 of senior with a 26-14 stoppage (RSC-Omnicroll) of Tasanmoke Thong-jan in the third round.

It was the third straight win for the BP women's team, a sensational follow up to the back-to-back victories of pinweight Rhea Sixto Ajuet and flyweight Annie Albania on opening day.

The Thai merit team, which scooped up a total of eight gold medals against only one by the Philippines in Vietnam two years ago, suffered its first and only defeat with the exit of Sohon.

The president of the Thai boxing association has announced they are targeting at least five gold medals.

GOLDEN MOMENTS

No surrender for this brave cop

POLICE SENIOR INSPECTOR NELson Pacudan knew his commander in chief was watching. Undaunted by the heavy drop inside the pool of defeat to bag the country's third gold medal in karate. Besides, 35, trailed 1-4 with 50 ticks left before hearing Vernacio Aguayo fine Tune, 6-5, in the finals of the 65 kg individual bouts.

She's just too quick

SEE YIM TOO QUICK AND OLYMPIAN that she had for tournament. Take cross-country trials cutting her shot. Marlene Bilbit scored the lib-ub more than three minutes ahead of the Indonesian runner-up to post the most lopsided win thus far in the sport, which is being held in Bacolod City.

Same weapon

ABM YAHE AND HERY THE ruled the Turbo Dallas Hotel event with weapons in the Emilio Aguinaldo College Sports and Cultural Center in Manila after an unusual display of synchronized swordplay. In earning the BP gold medal output in results to Jose Yang and Ting were the only pair to use the same weapon—the sword—compared to their rivals who, used a sword and a spear.

First time

SOUTHEAST ASIAN GAMES FIRST-timer Aurelio Angeles emerged the supreme winner in the pistol/rifle/gun-automatic event at the PSC Pistol shooting range in Fort Bonifacio, Taguig City. Banking on impressive 20.07, he tagged the gold in his first shot in the Sea Games. As ripped nonpariel Ariel Santos, who had 20.75, for a 1.2/Philippine finish.

Drama-filled win

NAILBIT MEDALIA SURVIVED an evasive-ridden men's solo final against Sidney Olimpia Irineo modular Wanderly Kelley 15-14, at the San Juan gymnasium. "They want to beat us so bad because we are the defending champions," said BP fencing head coach Bobbi Garcia.

TODAY'S SCHEDULE

PHILIPPINE DAILY INQUIRER

BUSINESS

Editor: Raul D. Pangalangan
Assistant Editor: Connie S. Mañalac

WHAT'S INSIDE

COCKTAILS
MetroPac, French firm eye new projects

Nov. inflation seen at 6.7-7.1%

Further hike in prices expected with VAT rate increase in 2006

By Michelle V. Remo

THE NATIONAL ECONOMIC and Development Authority said the inflation rate in November would likely reach between 6.7 percent and 7.1 percent as the high cost of oil continued to put pressure on prices of food and other basic commodities.

This is higher than the Bangko Sentral ng Pilipinas' 4-to-5 percent inflation rate projection for the month.

Inflation rose 7 percent in the year through October.

The latest unit of Neda's projection for November took into consideration the slight decline in oil prices during the month.

The government extended months ago that its updated inflation target of between 5 to 6 percent for 2005 was already unrealistic, given the substantial increases in oil prices this year. The government, which is on track to meet its budget deficit target, assumed that the sharp rise in oil prices in 2006 would no longer be experienced next year.

The Neda is expecting the full-year inflation rate to come in at between 7.7 percent and 7.9 percent.

"The prices of food such as sugar, rice, coffee, and canned fish, were higher due to the increases in the cost of petroleum," Socrates Arevalo, director of the Neda's policy and planning staff, said in a press conference yesterday.

Arevalo said the impact of the expanded value-added tax, which was implemented on Nov. 1, would already be reflected in the November inflation figure.

The new VAT law expanded the coverage of the 10% to include products and services previously exempted, such as oil and electricity.

It also provides for an increase in the VAT rate from 10 to 12 percent starting February next year.

Economic jurists are expected to further increase next year due to this, although the Department of Finance said the increase would be lower than 10 percent because of the measures implemented to mitigate the impact of the tax law.

(more, A2)

INQUIRER MONITOR

Figures that matter to our nation's life

Economies in the Philippines

As of November 2005

PHILIPPINE Economic Zone Authority (PEZA) members (A2) economists across the country. One in thousand firms are ranked within the IT operational economic. More than half of the operational economic are private and license IT parks and buildings. In 2004, PEZA received P4.6 billion worth of investments while exports reached US$32.30 billion.

Source: PEZA, NSO Research

T-bill rates fall across the board for the 4th week

TREASURY BILL RATES FELL ACROSS the board for the fourth straight week yesterday, on the expected drop in the supply of government securities next month and the high level of liquidity in the market given predictions by investors for the debt paper.

The 364-day T-bill rate, used to build up a benchmark for pricing loans, fell by 0.1 percentage point to 7.5 percent, or 7.5 basis points lower than last week's.

The short-month rate, which was more than three times oversubscribed, with tenders totaling P3.020 billion as against the government's offering of only P1 billion.

"The market bounced in the months of auctions in December. The result was also brought about by the positive sentiment over the current fiscal position and the liquidity in the market at the moment," National Treasurer Omar Cruz said in a phone interview.

The 182-day T-bill rate fell by 11.4 basis points to 7.301 percent. The six-month paper generated security of around P7.626 billion worth of bids, or about two times higher than the P3.5-billion offering.

The 364-day T-bill fetched a rate of 7.364 percent, reflecting a slump 42.5-basis-point drop from a week ago. Tenders for the one-year debt instrument hit P11.016 billion, much more than the government's P2-billion debt offering.

Cruz said the Bureau of Treasury was studying the possibility of cancelling two scheduled T-bill auctions for December given the government's healthy cash position.

The Department of Finance earlier said the government's budget deficit for the first 10 months of the year stood at only P119.8 billion, or way below the P150-billion ceiling set for the period. The lower-than-target deficit, which was brought about by tight spending and revenue collection that was higher than programmed, boosted market confidence. Michelle V. Remo

CURRENCIES

STOCK MARKET

(For more stories, turn to Page B4)

Shares end flat on low GDP growth report

STOCKS ENDED YESTERDAY CLOSED FLAT following disappointing third quarter growth figures, dealers said.

They said the market might be taking a breather after a three-day weekend and letting recent strong gains cool a bit.

The Philippine Stock Exchange composite index rose 1.20 points at 1,121.26, barely reaching its very narrow range of 1,122.73 to 1,116.79 as the market digested the growth data. Turnover was 1.03 billion shares worth P602 million. Decliners outpaced advancers 99 to 81, while 61 stocks remained unchanged.

The economy expanded 5.1 percent in the third quarter of the year, well below market expectations, due to the effects of high oil

(more, B2)

Car assembly firms buck proposed bio-fuels law

By Bernie F. Dominguez

LOCAL VEHICLE ASSEMBLERS HAVE OPPOSED a bitterly fought proposal for mandatory use of bio-fuels in all vehicles, saying consumers should be given options.

But at the same time, members of the Chamber of Automotive Manufacturers of the Philippines, Inc. said firms should be given perks if the proposed law come law.

In a letter to Sen. Miriam Defensor-Santiago, Caroge president Elizabeth H. Lee said government products with additives such as ethanol, called "alternative fuels", which means consumers must have the choice on whether to use them.

Santiago chairs the Senate committee on energy, which is handling Senate Bill No. 2007 or the regional use of gasoline mixed with ethanol and of diesel mixed with coconut methyl ester (coco-methyl ester).

Calls for the promotion of bio-fuels gained support amid the price shock in the international crude oil market in the past months.

Lee said that generally, autos run with carburetors are not compatible with bio-fuels, while vehicles equipped with fuel injection systems could run them.

"The law had specifications should be consistent with the Worldwide Fuel Charter," Lee said. The current Charter provides that ethanol blends (with gasoline) should be limited to a maximum mixture of 10 percent while bio-diesel should contain 5-percent (B5) at most."

The Caroge chief added that industry players should be given a lead time of two years from the effectivity of such a law before the mandates was applied.

She said it would take time long to develop compliant vehicles from exempt industries in commercial release.

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Arroyo and other tales

A FRIENDLY BANKING CLIENT OF A MAKATI-based bank received unexpected holiday cheer yesterday morning when the crisp P5,000 bundle she had just withdrawn from the bank's friend teller turned out to be all "Arroyo" bills.

If the Bangko Sentral's estimates that only "less than P100,000" of the misspelled P5.09 bills had been released to the banking system is correct, then 5 percent of the roll recently issued to retailer has been scattered by unlucky individuals.

Under normalcy, the bank and Bangko Sentral is trying to put a positive twist to the unfortunate financial debut of the first bills bearing the name of the new governor, who last month left to visit with an economist for a GMA database as well.

The last time that such typographical goof-proofreading blow happened was in the early '80s, with no less than coin and literary patron Jaime Laya presiding over the treasury's multi-color "yellow-orange in effect," the Latin name of the Philippine monetary unit, the eagle adorning the 50-centavo coin, became "philoxenya jellicyi."

But, unlike today, the debutante coins were never withdrawn from circulation, thus being dubbed hoped for his rare coins, with billions of them flooding the market.

According to the grapevine, the in-house investigation is now focusing on the possibility that the P100 bill were swiped with the name of Glenda Mocapajal-Arroyo having to be unpopular with the area's printing plant.

The error was apparently discovered only after Bangko Sentral employees began with drawing their salaries from the ATM machines inside the bank complex. (Tip: If you cannot get cheap bills from your depository banks for holiday giveaways, the ATM machines inside the Bangko Sentral always carry the "traditional" money. Failing that, you can always try the Bangko Sentral's Cash Department, which is open to the media in public.)

Money-go-round

- ERNIE Y. Spoon Lee Lowes has acquired a 49-percent stake in a site IT building complex controlled by talent director Gerardo H. Ilustrious Mahong.
- CEBU Pacific still considering flying to the United States once it corners at least half of the Icelandic passenger market. The following met airliner already assesses the 10 percent of the market once in launching in 1996.
- LBC Universal Robinson's C2 green tea drink, Wrigley's Orbit sugar free chewing gum has also been flying off supermarket and grocery shelves. Orbit is made mainly with xylitol, sugar laden siblings that are made in its Antipolo plant. Wrigley's imports Orbit all the way from China.

Heard through the grapevine

MARC Jimenez was forced to spend a few more weeks in the US postponement after he was found to have distributed "farewell gifts" to prison guards as well as fellow inmates.

(Email: cocktales_pdi@philstar.net or cocktales_pdi@yahoo.com)

Gov't approves transmission line projects in Mindanao

CUMBAO CITY—THE GOVERNMENT HAS approved a P3-billion worth of power transmission projects in Mindanao, and P9-billion feasibility for Mindanao and Mindanao Economic Development Council's (EDC) that about Express.

Duterte said recently that Mahardiang has endorsed the Senguil-Pinugo, Zamboanga City and Central Station Transmission Line Projects that were among the major items under the government's infrastructure development projects.

The two projects were prepared for funding under the Miraswes Fund, named after former Japanese Finance Minister Kiichi Miyazawa, who revealed the $30-billion aid initiative in 1999 to help Japan's Asian neighbors that were hit hard by the economic downturn that began in mid-1997.

Of the amount, $1.4 billion were allocated for the Philippines.

Duterte said the Senguil-Pinugo 138 kV Transmission Line Project, when completed, will serve Zamboanga City's load requirement that is projected to increase by 6.3 percent a year until 2015.

The project is also designed for future connection of the island-province of Basilan to the Mindanao grid.

Duterte said the P1.087 billion General Santos-Tacurong 138 kV Transmission Line Project will replace the existing lines.

The project is expected to ensure system stability and reliability of power supply as well as higher power transfer capacity between substations, as well as access to future base load plants in General Santos City and Sultan Kudarat through the Mindanao grid.

The two projects were proposed by the National Transmission Corporation (Transco) in 1998, but have gone through a number of hitches following the adoption of austerity measures among government agencies and corporations. Jeoffrey Maitem, PDI Mindanao Bureau

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Telof offers pre-paid cards

DAVAO CITY—THE STATE-RUN TELEKOM-munications Office (Telof) has joined the pre-paid land/airport after partnering with a private communications network to issue international and long-distance cards.

Telof's prepaid unit used a compatible with mobile phones equipped with subscriber identification module (SIM) cards provided by one of the four mobile phone companies.

"So far so Telof is concerned, the use of pre-paid card is very efficient. We do away with the problem of collection," Commissioner H. Isetto Emphasis, chief of the Telecommunications Office, told the business.

He said the government has taken the lead in partnering up with the private sector, in this case, the Bayani Card Inc., to provide the underserved market of Filipinos, who are always looking for alternative and accessible means of communication.

Emphasis said the partnership with Bayani Card Inc. for additional prepaid services. The TELOFcard card, said also help market the telephone lines of the government.

"We have about 22,000 lines available, mostly in Davao and Mindanao," he said.

The TELOFcard prepaid card card is for Telof landline subscribers who want to limit their outbound calls.

Emphasis said for as low as P150 a month, subscribers can use their landline phones to call any phone line in the country at a flat fee of P1 a minute.

The card calls for P300, equivalent to a 30-minute long distance domestic call.

He said a version of the TELOFcard, which would enable families of Overseas Filipino Workers (OFWs) to call their kin once abroad, would soon be launched.

With the TELOFone International Prepaid card, a call abroad would cost US$0.10 a minute, about US$0.30 less than what other providers charge.

Emphasis said the government would continue to look for other ways to serve the rural population. Amelia Bautista, PDI Mindanao Bureau

UNAUTHORIZED DUPLICATION IS STRICTLY FORBIDDEN
CLIO BY AFFILIATE LAW

Lower

By Abigail L. Ho

THE INTERNATIONAL contract price of liquefied petroleum gas is expected to slide by an equivalent of P1 per kilogram in December, providing an early Christmas gift to the country's heavily burdened consumers.

Industry leader Petron Corp., which projected a softening of international prices as early as the second week of November, said LPG prices could still go down by P1 per kilogram before the year ends as contract prices could ease further.

Counter cyclical

While oil firms had been reducing the prices of their gasoline, diesel and kerosene since the start of the month, they had been hiking LPG prices due to the spike in November international contract prices.

According to data from the Department of Energy, the international prices of LPG had spiked to $549 per metric ton (MT) this month, rising $30 from October's price of $519 per MT.

Prices rose by close to $80 per MT in October from the September price of $440.20 per MT, the highest single month-on-month increase since 1999.

According to Petron, however, this trend would not be sustained until December.

Price cuts

In anticipation of the softening of international prices, Petron's rival Pilipinas Shell Petroleum Corp. slashed prices of its Shellane brand LPG by P1 per kilogram over the weekend.

Petron did not follow its competitor's move as it still had some leeway to maintain its prices at current levels.

The oil firm had refrained from increasing LPG prices over the past weeks after jacking up its Gasul brand LPG prices by P1 a kilogram last Nov. 9.

Since then, competitors Caltex Philippines Inc. and Total (Philippines) Corp. have increased their cooking gas prices by P1 a kilogram.

Shell had hiked prices by P1.50 per kilogram. Following its recent price rollback, however, the company's net price hike had been cut to only 50 centavos per liter.

Moderating effect

Petron public affairs manager Virginia Ruivivar said in a statement that Petron hoped to moderate the LPG prices of its competitors at the retail level with its decision not to hike prices at a time when all other oil firms were raising their prices.

"In a deregulated environment, market competition ultimately dictates LPG retail prices," she said yesterday.

According to industry data, Petron has the biggest share of the LPG market with 27 percent.

Jollibee renews push for India

Expansion strategy aimed at boosting '06 earnings

By Elizabeth L. Sanchez

JOLLIBEE FOODS CORP., THE country's largest quick service food chain, is resuming its fast food brand acquisitions in India, Asia's third largest economy.

Jollibee chair and president Tony Tan Caktiong said his firm was scouting for a local brand to key entry in the Asian subcontinent.

"We want to be in India. We (started) exploring, just made an (share) it nothing yet," Tan Caktiong said. "Probably it will be (a) local brand in India, as a buy-in. We prefer a majority (acquisition) if possible in the fast food segment."

The Jollibee chief made his comments following the 18th anniversary celebration of KBK yesterday at The Manager's Hotel in Makati, where he was honored as one of the country's business pioneers.

Tan Caktiong who said Jollibee had temporarily stopped talks with New Delhi-based restaurant Haveli since the latter saw its action talks with another investor.

"The last we heard is that they have an option to either talk (with both) also," Tan Caktiong said. "Let's see how they progress. We have privately stopped talking to them."

Haveli was established in 1984 and is now a chain of luxury hotels, award-winning restaurants, family-style restaurants, ice cream parlors, pastry shops and food processing plants in India. The chain caters to over 50,000 guests every day.

Tan Caktiong also said that Jollibee's potential fast food chain Chowking Foods Corp. is exploring the Indian market separately for expansion.

"It is Jollibee that is going to buy [a company in India]," he added. We can enter (or venture in) plotting India for Chowking. They are still looking at that angle. We were told that the Indian market prefers Chinese food when they eat out."

Aside from its planned Indian entrance, Jollibee will further expand its store network by 100 outlets across all of its brands including fast food.

Jollibee recently acquired specialty coffee chain Red Ribbon Bakeshop Inc., which will add to its string of 1,992 stores in the Philippines and 131 stores abroad, which are mostly in Guam through Jollibee Plaza.

Tan Caktiong said the Jollibee Group is readying putting up Red Ribbon outlets in New Jersey and other cities on the East and West Coasts in the US that are densely populated with Filipino expatriates.

Despite a soft third quarter, the addition of Red Ribbon in the Jollibee line, as well as expected stronger consumer spending during the Christmas holidays, are seen pulling up Jollibee's net income results during the fourth quarter.

Tan Caktiong, however, did not give specific projections.

American Power Conversion (APC), a leading provider of global, end-to-end infrastructure availability solutions, has long been regarded as the company that provides efficient, effective and legendary reliability and protection against leading causes of downtime: data loss and hardware damage.

In the Philippines, APC Global Services (AGS), APC's world-class pre- and post-sales service offerings for APC products, is now available through American Technologies Inc. and ClixLogic.

American Technologies Inc. services (for Silcon, SUVT, SURT, and DX-type R, and Cooling) include:
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•Extended warranty
•Battery replacement

ClixLogic services (for DX-type A, Smart-UPS, Symmetra, Back-UPS) include:
•Preventive maintenance
•Start-Up or Installation services
•Extended warranty
•Battery replacement

For Visayas and Mindanao areas, ClixLogic is offering services for all products.

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DISCLOSURES

LIBERTY Flour (Mfr) Inc. shareholders on record as of Dec. 15 are entitled to a 7.8 percent cash dividend on 90,176 per share payable on Dec. 21.

JOLLIBEE Group Inc. will hold its annual shareholders' meeting on Dec. 28, 9 to 11 at the 2/F Lounge in the 4th floor of the Jollibee Home Building, 1222 Dec. 10 J. Floyd Ave., Mabuhi City. All shareholders on record as of Nov. 30 are entitled to notice of and to vote at the said meeting.

The annual shareholders' meeting of the **Philippine Telegraph and Telephone Corp.** (PLDT) scheduled for Jan. 8, 2006 has been reset to July 26, 2006.

Fernand M. Stoelen, president of the **Philippine Savings Bank**, acquired 100 common shares at P58 per share on Dec. 23. *Compiled by Jazmin Jimena, PDI Research*

Big telcos oppose 3G applications of new firms

Gov't workers bone negotiating skills

By Ronnel W. Domingo

THE DEPARTMENT OF TRADE and Industry yesterday said it expects to be a more adept trade negotiator after 542 government and civil society leaders went through intensive training on the World Trade Organization's trading system.

Trade Undersecretary Thelma G. Aquino said in a press briefing that trainees have enlisted in the pioneering Philippine Global Trade e-Learning Program, which combines online instruction as well as face-to-face simulated negotiations.

The DTI signed two memoranda of agreement to implement the program—one with the Institute of Agriculture and Trade Policy and another with the International Affairs Office.

"This program would allow government and even private-sector representatives to get up-to-date on available knowledge as well as to give them the chance to interact with knowledgeable people around the world," Aquino said.

The official said the DTI hoped to continue the program with an graduate—the Tariff Commission, which is responsible for International Development (USAID) and Asian Development Bank (ADB)—if subsequent Cooperation Agreements should it prove useful.

"The aim in choosing the courses [which covered issues to do things with regard to international trade]," Aquino said, among this mode of learning."

The program provided basic and advanced e-learning courses on the multilateral trading system and WTO, which touches on of agriculture, environment, textiles and intellectual property.

The training's goal is to enhance the Philippines' meaningful participation in future WTO negotiations and the effective implementation of trade agreements in the country, Aquino said.

According to the DTI, the program was piloted for three weeks last January at the Philippine Trade Training Center with 40 representatives from 12 DTI bureaus and regional offices that served as pilot groups, trainees.

"We have seven had the opportunity to offer such kitchen knowledge to us many," Aquino said. "It is important to keep all our stakeholders well informed so that we can get their inputs in developing our country's position on the sectoral issues at stake in the global trade negotiations."

He said the current WTO negotiations ground an overwhelming agenda to consider economy.

The Undersecretary, which is the basis for the upcoming 6th WTO Ministerial Conference in Hong Kong in December, includes 148 and issues of negotiations in such fields as services, agriculture, trade and the environment.

By Clarence S. Mateo

MAJOR MOBILE PHONE CARRIERS HAVE opposed the plan of AZ Communications Inc. and Next Mobile Inc. to operate third-generation or 3G wireless telecommunications services.

Globe Telecom Inc., Digitel Mobile Phone Inc. and Bayan Telecommunications Inc. have asked the National Telecommunications Commission to dismiss the application of Next Cities on grounds that both firms were mere "speculators" and did not have enough money to put up the network.

Globe, in its petition to the NTC, said the two firms merely hoped to acquire the limited 3G frequencies and then later turn around and sell the licenses to other firms.

Globe and Next Mobile Inc. a "pattern to-sale version" as the industry while AZ has no track record at all.

Trunk radio operator Next Mobile Inc., which is affiliated with listed firm Globetrends Inc. and AZ Communications Inc. linked to Antonio Cojuangco have told the NTC separately that they would spend billions of pesos for the 3G rollout.

Other small players that have filed applications to operate 3G network include Connectivity Unlimited Resources Inc. of Roberto Ongpin, Multi-Media Telephony Inc. linked to Enrique Razon, and Pacific Wireless Inc.

Meetings on the opposition to the applications of AZ and Next Mobile have started and will likely extend to the middle of December.

The Commission is scheduled to award five 3G frequencies to telecom qualified and capable of operating and financing the roll-out of the next generation of cellular services.

The 3G network will allow wireless subscribers to make full-motion, real-time video calls and download content faster.

So far, only Globe, Digitel's Sun Cellular and Smart Communications Inc. can claim a track record in wireless telecommunications.

Digitel questioned the financial capability of the two firms in its opposition filed with the NTC.

"We are opposing their applications because they do not have the financial capability to operate a 3G network," said Digitel senior vice president William Chastanet.

In the case of Next Mobile, Pamintuan pointed out the company has long been operating on a low.

Globe also said that Next Mobile has been operating since 1998 but only managed to garner 56,000 subscribers.

"Applicant is also plagued with technical issues of disclosure and noncompliance rules, network failures, labor disputes and cash flow problems," said Globe of Next Mobile.

Bayantel, meanwhile, said the NTC that Next Mobile's operation "would constitute needless, wasteful and uneconomic duplication of existing telecom services resulting in a waste of valuable resources."

Nov. inflation seen at 6.7-7.1%

From page B1

The DOF said the rate of electricity was same as uncertainty is present.

Mitigating measures include reduction of tariffs on imported oil, removal of excise taxes on petroleum and oil if inflation too explosive.

Although a higher VAT rate would put pressure on prices next year, the impact could be minimized by the strengthening of the peso.

The BSP has projected that the peso would average between 53 and 57 to a dollar next year. Yesterday, the peso moved strongly closing at 53.36/37 to a dollar and registering an intraday high of 53.19 to a dollar.

Shares end flat on low GDP growth report

From page B1

prices, political instability and sluggish farm and industrial output.

With the poor third-quarter performance, officials said they were now expecting the full-year gross domestic product (GDP) growth to come in below the initial target of 5.5 percent.

"Before trading started, investors were thinking that the GDP report could be a catalyst for another market rally but it turned out the figures were disappointing," said Ron Rodrigo of Atrium Capital Equities.

Trading was remote sluggish on Monday, due to more investors fear about the poor GDP data, said Rodrigo.

"We're coming into the market after a long weekend. It's possible that some investors are still on vacation," said Oliver Plana of Atrium Equities Inc.

Philippine Long Distance Telephone was the most actively traded stock, rising P.50 to 31.2.50.

Ayala Corp. gained P2.50 to P342.50 while east Bank of the Philippine Islands advanced 50 centavos to P50. Manila Water Co. rose 1½ centavos to P6.80.

Jan Philippine Corp. A shares, exclusive to Filipinos, gained 50 centavos to P65 while San Miguel Corp. B shares, available to foreigners, ended steady at P66.50. AFP

Semirara sees strong Q4 finish

SEMIRARA MINING CORP. POSTED A 937 profit after tax (NPAT) of P700 million in October and is poised for a strong fourth quarter finish following the resumption of operations of Proponent's Colinas 2 power plant and improving sales from existing and new clients.

"The company expects a fourth quarter profit of P774 million, an end 2004 NPAT of P1.6 billion and year-end cash of over P1 billion. Underpinning the bright outlook is the combined effects of the resumption of operation of Calaca 2 and the higher prices brought about by the expanded rights added to it since online beginning Nov. 1, '08 expect 100% to be much better," the company said. Third quarter income was P1.11 million.

Fourth quarter income will benefit from the massive waste stripping activity up to the third quarter as the company used its expanded capacity to anticipate next 2 higher sales.

National Power Corp.'s Calaca plants, the company's single biggest buyer, finally resolved its technical difficulties and kicked back into operation in mid-October. It has already placed higher orders but said for the rest of the year to make up for lost ground.

New clients, including the power-intensive pulp and paper industry are also coming in. Semirara said higher oil prices are making cheaper coal a preferred alternative to many oil-base industries.

MetroPac, French firm eye new ventures

WORLD MONEY: Brandon Inc., the Philippine unit of Brandon Worldwide Money Transfer, appointed Bank of Commerce as a sub-agent for its money transfer services. Banco Comercio president Raul B. De Mesa and World Money Transfer president Antonio Martinez sealed the deal with shareholders, as Francis Hugo, World Money Transfer treasurer and Banco Comercio's SVP Manuel A. Mondejar look on.

Targeting toll road projects

By Clarissa S. Bacino

METRO PACIFIC CORP. THE LOcal unit of Hong Kong's First Pacific Co. Ltd., is in talks with French firm Groupe Egis for possible joint venture deals in toll road projects other than the North Luzon Expressway and the Skyway where they both have existing interests.

One of the possible projects being considered is the R200 million extension of the Skyway according to Metro Pacific's top official.

"We have a general agreement with Egis to pursue toll road projects together, whether as an investor or operator," said Metro Pacific president Jose Ma. Lim in an interview. "But these are all still exploratory."

The Skyway, a 9.8-kilometer elevated highway from Magallanes to Alabang, can be extended by another six to seven kilometers to Bicutan, he said. The third phase of the Skyway project, worth $600 million, will connect it with the main road leading to NAIA3 area.

The Skyway project is controlled by Citra Metro Manila Tollways Corp., a joint venture between Substantial Asia PE Corp. Lamoiree Group Pteranda and state-owned Philippine National Construction Corp. Metro Pacific has a 26 percent stake in it but it had offered to take over control from the Indonesians early this year.

"They (Indonesians) are still evaluating [the offer]. Meanwhile, we have to look at other opportunities," said Lim.

There are other toll projects that the joint venture with Egis can look into, he said. He, however, refused to elaborate on the details of these projects.

Metro Pacific chair Manuel V. Pangilinan earlier mentioned the Southern Tagalog Arterial Road or the Star highway as one option.

Egis has a 32 percent stake in Manila North Tollways Corp., a company controlled by Lopez-owned First Philippine Infrastructure Development Corp. (then operator). The French firm is scaling an electronic toll network system to highway operators under its unit called Easytrip Services Corp.

The French firm specializes in projects such as roads and highways, airports, railways and other public utilities. It is controlled by Caisse des Depots et Consignations or CDC, which is a strong financial group and fund manager in Europe.

"There are other projects in South Luzon but not necessarily the SLEX (South Luzon Expressway)," he added.

Detailed issues must be resolved first before Metro Pacific and Egis can pursue the extension of Skyway, he said.

"The question is if we can pursue [phase two of the Skyway without the participation of the phase one stakeholders," he said. "The creditors of phase one might also become interested."

CDC's contract with the government on the Skyway project supposedly involved the construction of an elevated highway from Makati City all the way to Alabang and the rehabilitation of ground level roads from Buendia to Alabang, and from Magallanes to Nichols.

The technocrat has spent about P800 million to build the Skyway in 1995. About 30 percent of the amount was loan raised from local and foreign creditors.

Gov't urged to declare 'bond holiday' in '06

By Doris C. Dumlao

THE GOVERNMENT SHOULD DECLARE A "bond holiday" next year, and make use of huge dollar inflows from overseas Filipino workers to avoid fresh global bond offerings, House economic affairs committee chair and Iloilo Deluxe adviser Jose Solsona said yesterday.

Solsona said reporters after a committee hearing yesterday that he had proposed to Malacañang a sharp reduction in the volume of Philippine bonds issued abroad through the "bond holiday" tack.

"There will be no increase in the amounts of bonds we have abroad but we must use these new funds," Solsona said.

He said the strategy would send a strong signal to the market that the government successfully have an increasing in debt burden.

With about $1.2 billion to OFW cash remittances [illegible] these control through informal channels), Solsona and the Philippines should not have any problem in resorting to debt requirements to the foreign [illegible] Filipinos could simply buy the dollars from the open market.

By making BSP (Republic of the Philippines) bonds scarce, the issuer would also make future borrowings cheaper.

Asked whether it was possible to declare a bond holiday for the whole of 2006, Solsona said the government could adopt the tack for certain period.

Based on its fiscal program, however, the government is planning to raise $3.1 billion through fresh foreign bond offerings in 2006. The amount represents 40 percent of the government's total borrowing requirements for the year. Proceeds from these new commercial borrowings are among those seen supporting a $900 million balance of payments surplus target for next year.

The borrowings are also seen to boost the BSP' gross international reserves to between $16 billion and $18.4 billion next year, up from a projected $15 billion by the end of this year.

Solsona said the Philippines should take advantage of the strong supply of dollars from OFWs to manage its debts instead of simply hoarding them. However, he noted that Bangko Sentral Governor Amando Tetangco Jr. was aspiring to shore up the GIR to as high as $21 billion.

Solsona, a former stock market arranger, also said he favored the use of interest payment savings to pay off some of the country's debts prior to maturity.

Specifically, he said the government could buy back expensive bonds, such as the BOP 2000, which was issued last February at an interest rate of 8.75 percent.

LIFESTYLE

FREE
FROM DISSATISFACTION

GAMEBOY

Relive the decade full of experimentation, playfulness and rebellion

VINTAGE LOOKING clothes from Artwork

NEW Wave Essentials

DOMINOES

For the ultimate '80s kid

Text and Photos by Cox Calonge
2BU Correspondent

GROWING UP/COLLECTIBLES/FASHION/RISE

Just close to the 1980s—the decade that brought us Madonna, The Breakfast Club, Strictly Ballroom, Lloyd Cole, The Princess Bride, Transformers, MTV, robot, cube, video and arcade games, and so much more cooler things.

Back then, most of us admired through the bad hair spray, thick shoulder pads and right-sized leggings. A decade or two later, we are proud to have survived them, and are coming overtime with the brainwave nostalgia of it all.

It was a decade full of experimentation, playfulness and rebellion. However, people did not take themselves too seriously to the point of asinine. Anyone could be silly and get away with it.

It comes as no surprise, then, that many people are still hung up over the '80s. Here are some things you can give him or her:

A Tribute To Pop Culture shirts—Pinay-style

One must be proud of one's roots and pop culture. These shirts are recent twist flavored as they account from afar, highlighting one's

RETRO bags from Artwork

Regent center, Hello Sugar Ayala or Centro Station. In stock at Happy Days stall in Red Lane Cinderella and Alabang Festival Mall (02)810-2524.

Retro bags

Artwork's bags are awash with character and colors. The designs are unique, featuring prints of iconic figures and funky art. Artwork's main branch is located in Glorietta (02)840-75 to P499.75).

Patchwork skirt

This piece of clothing is distinctly '80s and is a statement in itself. Available at Bench, Glorietta (02)8...

Vintage shirts

Artwork's vintage collection embodies the spirit of free expression, funny experiments

(07/04/05) C3

SHOPWISE
A Christmas Toy Story
A play of convenience.
Rejoice in the little blessings life has to offer.
A play in a holiday dreamland of goodness and value. As Shopwise presents A Toy Story for Christmas!
SHOPWISE
the good life you can afford

AGE of Empires III

CIVILIZATION IV

KIRBY Canvas Curse

SOUL Calibur I

Gifts for geeks

By Javier Mas
ZNN Correspondent

THE CHRISTMAS SEASON ALWAYS SEEMS A time of good video games coming out. But non-gamer and gamer alike have been dreading those quickly-installed gifts for our male (and in-it, since they now have to compete with electronic goodies for their sister's/husband's attention.

Nevertheless, for anyone wanting to give a gift for girl, or female gamer like to add themselves) something done to their tastes, read through, here are some things worth checking out.

XBOX 360

The first of the next generation consoles is to released, this monster features a lot more than simple gameplay. The box's hard drive is self-allows you to rip CDs and play favorite music, videos and photos from your MP3 players or other USB devices.

It also features backwards compatibility with your old XBOX, so you can still play your classic games on the new system. It provides a connection to XBOX Live, Microsoft's online gameplay service, which is said to be by far, better than before.

What of the games? Take your pick. Perfect Dark Zero, Call of Duty 2, Project Gotham Racing, and the soon-to-arrive Halo 3 (that game alone deserves the purchase of the system).

For those who find the price to steep ($400), a cheaper version which includes the basic console itself with peripherals can be bought at $300, though be one a missing the hard drive and with it most of the cool features. Believe me, the drive is worth more than the extra $100.

Sid Meir's Civilization IV

System: PC

Sid Meir's time-based classic is back, but this sequel really does the franchise justice. Building a civilization has never been more fun, feel and easy with its all-new interface.

Plus: There's online multi-player, and it actually works! Gone are the days when you'd be stuck playing against servants, from paper clips and cups to time and cars, even some wrestlers) and having it take a day or so to get one—and downright weird. Tons of cute, Japanese-style design will love this title, and more hard-core players will love its addictive gameplay. Even your girlfriend will love this title for its simplicity and hellish battery consumption.

Age of Empires III

System: PC

If Civilization IV allows the more cerebral of us to run a real risk, Ense Age of Empires III lets the more militaristic side of us to change history. It may not be anything new (given standard RTS game), but the graphics, gameplay and even the music of this title are absolutely wonderful. Nothing comes close to it in quality. Plus, the built-in online ranging area—with buddy lists, chat, ladders, wars and more—is a model multi-player interface.

We love Katamari

System: PS2

This is the sequel to one of the quirkiest games to date. Nothing in recent memory can compare with the premise of rolling up a ball of junk (anything actually, from paper clips and cups to time and cars, even some wrestlers) and having it take a day or so to get one—and downright weird. Tons of cute, Japanese-style design will love this title, and more hard-core players will love its addictive gameplay. Even your girlfriend will love this title for its simplicity and hellish battery consumption.

Soul Calibur II

System: PS2

This third game in the Soul Calibur series (and fifth in the entire Soul saga, if you're counting) is the ultimate fighting game this season. Boasting of new fighters, and the ability to create a fighter, this latest installation (still rarely) retains the addictive gameplay throughout the series' breaks.

Kirby's Canvas Curse

System: Nintendo DS

A pink puffball doesn't exactly give us the image of a hero. Nevertheless, that is what Kirby is—and he has proven to be a lot of fun for people color out the lackadaisy.

Unlike previous Kirby games, this sequel tests not just your game skills but your drawing talents as well. Using the touch-screen stylus of the Nintendo DS, you "draw" platforms and platformers to help Kirby roll along the way. It is more entertaining than you might think, and those of us who aren't afraid to show a friend we're the color pink are in the clear.

XBOX 360

Here are some hot electronic goodies worth checking out

DEMON Francis Miller

Pinoy ingenuity behind Korean online game sensation

A LITTLE KNOWN FACT IS THAT Filipino techies are the ones making the exciting stories that will enthrall and even scar Online Role-playing game (MMORPG) which has become a craze in the Philippines.

The new MMORPG blockbuster from Korea presents a galactic setting wherein three racial groups—the Empire of Accuria, the Bellum Federation, and the Holy Alliance of Cora—clash with equally devastating power and weaponry set to war with each other for dominance of the universe.

From these three races the gamers will choose which to join and fight for, with their individual and collective performances determining how this adventure supersell develop and end.

The stunning and supposedly creative stories for interstellar warfare are conceived and written by a team of Filipino techies led by Dean Fausto Allan Acerdas, technical playwright, sight-one Mahinai member, and founder of the content development firm, Kestrel IMC.

"Our aim is to create story arcs that players can appreciate and get into. Since our game is expansive by there races, our storyboard stories that can each turn to cure and amplify the very core of the RF Online playing experience. Our massive storyline for the three year members the secret origins of the races over a series of cataclysmic revolutions and adventures," Allan explains.

"The story must serve the game, of course, and create opportunities for players to be involved in the outcome of events. Part of our strategy is to create situations where the actions of players determine the path of the story."

Well-rounded characters

The stories developed by Allan's group reinforce the unique and characters of each of the races.

The Accurians have fashioned themselves into cyborgs to attain physical superiority, whereas the Bellatrix are a loosely independent race of inventors who combine creative tools and weapons with the light form of universal magic called Rune. The Cora-top ambient force to acquire supernatural strength and mentality. Into the Dark Force, to teleport people and equipment.

Those who want to join any of the three races may visit their websites...www.accuria.ph ... of the Empire of Accuria, www.bellatrix.ph of the Bellatrix Federation, and www.cora.ph of the Holy Alliance of Cora. Players may visit www.rfonline.ph for registration. The game has some online since Sep. 1.0.

The three warring races were all developed in Korea, but it was Allan's group together with the RF Business Unit that decided on the final naming conventions.

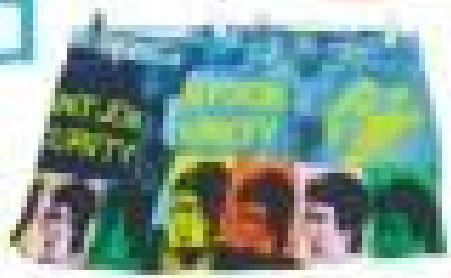
Much of Allan's work involves interweaving the three races along the main plot through various points of conflict and social characterization.

Although there have differences, it is their common consistency with human logic and adherence to their moral dimensions—as determined in Allan's stories—that make RF Online a captivating and thrilling personal experience.

As the content of a game, we can explore aspects of the human condition such as loyalty, duty, evolution and cultural development without losing sight of the fact that this immersive game is first and foremost an engaging way to entertain the imagination," says Allan.

For the ultimate '80s kid

From page C1



tees and classic nostalgia. There are shirts for everyone, in eye-catching prints and colors (P289 to P495).

Converse Chuck Taylor shoes

The shoe has always been close to the hearts of individualists, and is now back with a vengeance. (P1,650 to P 3,950).

Nintendo 28 Supersized Dominoes

Suddenly playing dominoes isn't so serious anymore. Packaged in a tin can lunch box with an all-star cast of Mario, Luigi, Yoshi and Donkey Kong, this 55-piece pack sets the three-year player apart from the others. Available at Hobbies Cavendish 3 (P1,799).

Scrunchies Pillow

This is one invention no one would mind hugging around, visit this at Chameleon, G/F, Cavendish Shopping Arcade (P360).

Gameboy Micro

The latest addition to the Gameboy family resembles the Game&Watch toys we were once crazy about. And get a load of this. It's compatible with all Gameboy Advance games and comes all SP features (P5,490).

Plug n' Play TV games

Remember your Atari days anywhere there's an idle box. But hold that thought. These games demand the same amount of brain cells you would use to solve Rubik puzzles, available at Rubik Shoppe (P1,299.75 to P3,999.75).

Warner Music's New Wave Essentials CD

The eighties compilation offers tracks from New Order, Siouxsie and the Banshees, The Smiths, The Jesus and Mary Chain, Talking Heads and more (P900).

Beauty wisdom of youth

Lorna Gabal

SOMETHING HAPPENED during my supposed "debut" as a full-fledged stylist in the Seventeen Fashion Model Search press conference a couple of weeks ago: I stumbled upon my calmer, collected self.

Thanks to my panicky fans, I was able to spare some sources and, thankfully, Polly had my brain functioning well enough to recognize the sheer luxury of solemn potential of the backstage chaos we were in the middle of!

With nine models around, all in the college level, I uncovered a gold mine of beauty tips and secrets!

Take note that these are ordinary girls who have transformed their looks into something extraordinary. They each have a beauty all their own, and proudly show it off. Take our cue from these seventeen models...starting with the precious insider info they shared with me, for you!

Ivonne Ong

What are your makeup essentials?

MAC eyeshadow, NYX concealer and Nutrilon 21 blush.

I just love your haircut. Who's your stylist?

I go to Marly of Salon de Manila, Towne Mendez, for my cut and color. Pricey pero very worth it. My hair is very low-maintenance; I hardly use product unless I want to flip it out, and it only takes Touch Up urea to achieve that look.

Geraldine Nethercott

How do you care for your skin?

I just use Ponds facial cleanser and Oil of Olay moisturizer. And I never fail to put lotion on my body—it keeps skin looking young and radiant.

I hear you're a makeup junkie! What are your must-have products and brands?

I definitely have to carry around concealer, blush and lip gloss. I absolutely love Clinique and The Body Shop—the latter is very affordable, too.

Charmaine Castejon

If you were on "Survivor" and had to carry only three beauty products, what would those be?

Just One Castile, Dot Brow But work, I'd say Philosophy Purity facial wash, Colorgenic moisturizer and Hard's Best Lip Balm.

I'm sure you hit some beauty hiccups along the way sometimes. What's the beauty dilemma you most dread?

Breakouts! I make sure I clean my face well, get enough rest and drink lots of water to avoid them.

Abbie Alvarez

What's in your beauty arsenal? I mean, what products keep you on top of the beauty ball?

Garnier Lip Balm for a less-worthy pucker; the Ultimate Cleansing Oil to sweep off make-up, and the Ultimate Eyelash curler to enhance my "chinky" eyes and short lashes.

ABBIE Alvarez Alabastro Alvarez

I love your gorgeous curls! Where did you have them done and how do you keep them bouncy and shiny?

I had my hair permed at Beauty Fit Arena in Ilocandia. I dig sweet shampoo for lovely curls to leave draping tresses. It smells great, and doesn't tear your scalp!

Sharon Yu

With your active, sporty lifestyle, what products keep you glowing with minimum fuss?

Instead to maintain healthy skin, Bye-Bye-Acnezia to prevent my facial allergies and pimples, and lip and cheek tint—the easiest makeup to put on!

Your hair is super straight and shiny. What's the secret behind the shampoo commercial-worthy mane?

Of course, there's always the ceramic straightening iron for days when your hair just won't cooperate! But I deep-condition with virgin coconut oil to compensate for styling damage. I also use Pantene Total Care Conditioner everyday.

Isabella Simone Magalona

You have one of the freshest faces I've ever seen. How do you manage to look like that all the time?

I sweat by the hours...all I'm really after is a clean face. I always wash my face with a simple facial cleanser, swipe on lip balm and put on face powder, then I'm out the door!

This could be a long shot, but do you ever feel insecure about the beauty you possess?

It's not really an insecurity, but some people think of me as a "chubby" girl. I don't even consider myself overweight at all, though. I eat right and work out just because of what people think, but to stay healthy.

Adrienne Almeda

What three items will we always find in your bag?

My Urban's Eyelash Curler, because it's the only thing I need to bring out my eyes; brown, because I'm not naturally tanned but I just adore the shade; Bronzing gloss, and lip gloss, because it doesn't cover up my face.

You can pull off your signature shorts with those Birkenstock logs! How do you care for the skin on your body?

I use Exotique Olive Body Scrub once a week to exfoliate, then use Fresh and Precious Body Cream everyday after showering.

Camille Cruz, Seventeen Favorite Model Search winner

Your makeup-free face doesn't lie—you have blemish-free, clear skin. Any tips on how to achieve that complexion?

I just clean my face really thoroughly, and exfoliate regularly. I love the mildness of Cetaphil, which is not only my skin saviour but as well. Ponds Cleanser and Rose Facial Wash keeps my pores completely clean. I also love St. Ives Apricot Scrub—even on the body!

What do you think is your most attended feature?

I like my eyes—I think they express every emotion without much words. Most people I know say they like my legs, though.

Mario Claudino Villacorta, Shiseido Magallage Girl

You're a cheerleader, student and now a model! What beauty staple do you one forget through your busy schedule?

I usually don't have time for makeup so I'm always ready to school or rehearsal shoots. But other than lip gloss and a great cleanser, I dig eyeliners because they make me feel glam even.

Anything you want to change about the way you look?

I'm very insecure of my muscular arms and legs, so I don't wear shirts so much. But, instead, I embrace myself and feel fabulous as soon as what outfit I'm wearing.

CAMPAIGN Campus

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